



Report of the E-Discussion

JOBS, DECENT WORK AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH

8 February – 16 March 2012

Organized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), and International Labour Organization (ILO)

Moderators

Mr. Stephen Pursey and Mr. Selim Jahan

Summary

The e-discussion on *Jobs, Decent Work and Inclusive Growth* was organized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), and International Labour Organization (ILO) and ran from 8 February to 16 March 2012. The e-discussion generated 148 contributions from more than 90 countries, presenting an opportunity for the international development community to formulate critical policy messages and elements for an action agenda to the UN Economic and Social Council's 2012 Annual Ministerial Review on productive capacity, employment and decent work.

The e-discussion focused on four broad topics divided into two phases in order to generate participants' perspectives on country experiences and best practices on the following: (1) decent work and employment as a strategy for crisis recovery and poverty reduction; (2) the role of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in job creation; (3) employment and decent work in a context of inclusive growth; and (4) women and young people's labour market participation. Although a number of recommendations arose from the discussion, several key messages emerged, including the following:

- To place employment and decent work at the centre of growth and development strategies.
- To promote full and productive employment for all, with a specific focus on women and young people.
- To create an enabling environment in which micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) can thrive.
- To focus on the quality of jobs and livelihoods to ensure inclusive growth.
- To highlight the importance of jobs, inclusive growth and decent work on the international development agenda.

I. Introduction

A. Background and Purpose

Employment and decent work are central to reducing poverty, achieving the [Millennium Development Goals](#) and fostering equitable, inclusive and sustainable development. The global economic and financial crisis exacerbated pre-existing challenges to the achievement of full employment and decent work in developing and developed countries alike. While unemployment and inequitable labour market outcomes remain high in developed countries, labour markets in developing countries continue to be characterized by high levels of underemployment, vulnerable employment and informal work. Many economies are simply not generating sufficient decent work opportunities to reduce poverty. Currently, around [39 per cent of the global labour force](#) – or 1.2 billion women and men in work – live on less than \$2 a day per person. Young people are faring particularly poorly; not enough jobs are being created to absorb new entrants to the workforce, which can contribute to social exclusion, political instability and conflict.

The e-discussion on [Jobs, Decent Work and Inclusive Growth](#)¹ was organized to bring together experts, practitioners and policymakers, from within and outside the UN system, to exchange ideas and perspectives on the global jobs crisis. This dialogue is one of several consultations that have taken place in preparation for the [2012 Annual Ministerial Review \(AMR\)](#)² of the [UN Economic and Social Council \(ECOSOC\)](#), which will assess progress towards the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals (IADGs) regarding employment, decent work and productive capacity and identify obstacles that may have harmed the process. This report aims to provide a synthesis of the e-discussion, including its organization, an analysis of the contributions made by participants and a summary of key messages for policymakers and other professionals working on these issues.

B. Organization of the E-discussion

The e-discussion was organized by [UNDP](#), [UNDESA](#), and [ILO](#). It ran from 8 February to 16 March 2012, and was hosted on UNDP's Teamworks platform. The discussion was organized around four broad topics: (1) recovering from the crisis by advancing decent work; (2) identifying opportunities and challenges for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs); (3) creating employment opportunities through inclusive growth; and (4) ensuring women and young people's access to employment and decent work. To initiate and facilitate the discussion among participants, expert moderators from ILO and UNDP introduced each topic with a short prompt and set of questions. The discussion page attracted 1,000 page views and 150 contributions by academics, policymakers, and practitioners from 90 countries. This fruitful exchange reflected a rich array of perspectives as well as a number of actionable and constructive recommendations for consideration by ECOSOC and the wider international community.

¹ The e-discussion web-page can be found at <http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/newfunct/amredis2012.shtml>

² The AMR was mandated by the Heads of State and Government at the 2005 World Summit. Its purpose is to assess progress on achieving the IADGs that have emerged from the major UN conferences and summits since 1990, including the MDGs. The 2012 AMR will be held during the ECOSOC Substantive Session in July in New York.

II. Discussion themes and questions

A. Phase 1: Moderated by Stephen Pursey, Director of the Policy Integration Department and Senior Advisor to the Director-General, ILO

Recovering from the crisis by advancing decent work

The world employment outlook is grim. In many developed countries, unemployment and precarious work is rising. Underemployment, casual and informal work remain predominant in many developing countries. Improving the economic outlook depends to a large extent on turning around the employment trends. Yet, labour markets are suffering from the weakness of global aggregate demand. This constitutes what many economists call a "negative feedback loop".

Question

- How do you think we can alter the direction of the so-called "negative feedback loop" of poor economic prospects interacting with weak labour markets? How can we make the relationship between growth and employment mutually reinforcing?

Identifying opportunities and challenges for MSMEs

Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) comprise the vast majority of businesses in most countries and are often responsible for the majority of job creation, but their productivity varies widely. In many developing countries, more than 90 per cent of MSMEs have less than 10 workers, most of which operate in an informal setting without legal recognition or registration and limited or no access to labour regulation and social insurance. The drivers of informality are multiple and include high incidence of poverty and saturated markets as well as limited access of enterprises to finance, infrastructure, information, value chains and skills.

Question

- How can the main constraints to higher productivity and better quality of jobs be addressed in these contexts? Can a gradual transition out of informality be promoted? How can we ensure that workers holding informal jobs enjoy some form of protection?

B. Phase II: Moderated by Selim Jahan, Director of Poverty Practice, UNDP

Creating employment opportunities through inclusive growth

Global employment and poverty trends show that economic growth does not automatically result in a significant reduction in poverty levels. In many cases, high rates of growth have not added new jobs to the economy, resulting in a phenomenon of jobless growth, which has deepened existing inequalities and social exclusion. In other contexts, the majority of people - while working - remain poor and deprived of necessary safety nets, resulting in a phenomenon of working poor. As evident from recent events, a shortage of productive employment can also deeply compromise social cohesion, contributing to social and political instabilities.

Countries that have pursued pro-poor growth strategies have been the most successful in reducing poverty and enhancing equality. To ensure this type of growth, governments need to promote policies that enable the creation of productive and decent jobs accessible particularly to those most disadvantaged. Stimulating the creation of productive employment and tackling long-term systemic labour market problems will require both political resolve as well as innovative policy solutions.

Questions

- In a country that you are familiar with, what inclusive policies could foster the creation of productive and decent jobs?
- What conditions need to be met for those policies to be successful, given that in some countries macro-economic conditions, regulatory and legal environment, social protection, education and training policies, among others, have been found to be quite effective?
- At the national/sub-national level, what types of investments could help generate jobs for those living in poverty in the sectors in which they work? What if any do you see the role of the state in such investments? If possible, please give specific country examples.

Ensuring women and young people's access to employment and decent work

The economic crisis has only exacerbated existing structural imbalances in labour markets pushing more and more people, particularly women and youth, into poverty. In many countries women work in unpaid jobs, in precarious working conditions or for unequal pay. A chronic shortage of decent jobs for youth is not only a risk factor for current political and social stability, but also can have long-term adverse impacts on human and social capital. The economic recovery is unlikely to generate enough employment opportunities to absorb the working age population and to shift the systemic imbalances. At the same time, the crisis has opened a space for dialogue and created political momentum and urgency to address these challenges.

Question

- Based on your knowledge of national strategies, what policies – in particular innovative schemes – could help include women and youth into the labour market?

III. Discussion highlights

E-discussion participants shared many ideas about measures that could be undertaken to make public policy more effective in the creation of productive jobs that would benefit those living in poverty. Still, any successful employment strategy will have to be anchored clearly in a country-specific development context. This is the approach of ILO's [Global Jobs Pact](#) which, since 2009, continues to promote employment-centred growth within a framework of related policies that can be adapted to national circumstances.

Macroeconomic policies and growth patterns

Despite impressive global economic growth over the last thirty years, the elimination of extreme poverty is an ongoing challenge. It has been widely recognized that productive employment is a missing link between growth and poverty reduction. Without active policy interventions that promote job-rich, pro-poor development, country experiences demonstrate that growth alone is not sufficient for job creation and sustainable development.

Macroeconomic policies should be pursued with an objective of stability and growth geared toward productive employment and inclusion of the poor. Such policies should be guided by data on employment, inequality and poverty. Incorporating employment targets and objectives into macroeconomic policy and national development strategies is critical to making the necessary shifts in income distribution to reduce inequality and poverty. Indeed, data-based and judicious labour market policies – coupled with productive employment, social protection, social dialogue and rights at work – are the key drivers of distributional change and inclusive growth.

Within sustainable medium-term frameworks, this would require a shift away from exclusive concern with tight fiscal and monetary policy and low inflation targeting during recessionary periods, to balance such concern with the need for public spending to foster productive capacities and investment, demand-led growth, social protection and Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) such as workers training, public employment services or public works. Since in many developing countries underemployment and poor quality of jobs are more prevalent than unemployment, a strategy to improve the quality of jobs in the informal sector (e.g., through proper regulation and increased productivity and protection of workers) and increase investments in agriculture where most of the poor work is advisable.

However, the inverse relationship between labour-intensity and productivity should be taken into consideration. Investing in sectors that employ the poor may result in a decline in productivity and wages and not necessarily in poverty reduction (e.g., one participant noted Côte d'Ivoire's experience, 2002-08). Therefore, a two-pronged approach to poverty alleviation has been recommended: first, enhancing productivity in labour-intensive (low productivity) sectors in which the poor predominantly work and secondly, in the longer-term, enabling the poor to access jobs in higher productivity sectors with increased wages.

Education, training and labour market participation of women and young people

Labour markets that continue to exclude a significant proportion of the population represent arguably the biggest structural issue in the global jobs discussion. Unemployment, underemployment and working poverty are particularly prevalent among women and youth. Targeted policy interventions might be beneficial for these groups, given specific challenges they face, including informality, low wages and discrimination.

Participants identified a number of government interventions that have yielded positive results. Those that have been successful aim to address barriers to crucial skills development through relevant education and training; ensure access to finance for entrepreneurs and small enterprises; and ensure social safety nets. Investments are recommended into the sectors where youth and women currently work (e.g., agriculture or the care economy), but with a longer-term view toward their inclusion in the more productive sectors (e.g., information and communication technologies, health and tourism).

Putting a gender lens on policies to recover from the crisis is vital and particularly important in considering the differing impacts of the crisis on women and men. Policy makers who design and implement national programmes should be trained to integrate issues concerning women and youth into national development strategies. Some participants recommended the elaboration of national strategies on employment (and gender equality) with clear targets for women and youth. This could result in positive employment outcomes and help ensure the necessary funding for programmes, thereby lowering barriers to their participation in the labour market. In addition, the voice and representation of women and youth should be increased in legislature, trade unions and employers associations and through other channels that lead to policy formulation.

Governments should also ensure a legal and regulatory environment suitable to the creation of decent jobs. For example, equal opportunities for women in accessing jobs could be fostered by enforcing national affirmative action policies in hiring, wage legislation - including equal pay, equal access to education, and the promotion of civil rights.

Learning quality, skills development and education-to-work transitions

A number of contributors identified the strong links between education and employment outcomes. Over the last few decades, this process has changed from a largely sequential one, in which education preceded job acquisition, to a lifelong interaction between learning and work. In many countries, educational systems suffer from gaps in access, quality and curriculum relevant to the demand for skills in the labour market. In addition, there are too few re-entry points to adult education systems, which allow workers to constantly upgrade their skills. Participants pointed to recent global progress in universal primary education and argued that similar concentrated efforts should be replicated at the secondary level and beyond in order to enhance the employability of young people (e.g. Chile and the Republic of Korea were identified as countries that have managed this successfully).

At the same time, the contributors recommended a paradigm shift in education from sequential and standardized schooling to the promotion of creativity, innovation and flexibility. Encouraging creative thinking and supporting skill building can help young women and men participate productively in rapidly changing and globally interconnected labour markets. As one participant noted:

"What matters is going to be 'learning how to learn' rather than a fixed body of past information in an era of rapid obsolescence. Rigid boundaries of country, a standard academic discipline or fixed location are facing paradigm shifts as globalization, connectivity and sharing replace old ways of doing things." - Anuradha Rajivan

In this regard, participants discussed concrete programmes that reflect innovative, effective approaches to expand school access to children and young people while ensuring they finish their

education. Thanks to a system of tax incentives in Brazil, private universities guarantee seats for low-income students. In Sri Lanka, proceeds from the national lottery go directly toward scholarships. The success of conditional cash transfer programmes in promoting children's school enrolment and health have helped break the intergenerational cycle of poverty, strengthen local markets and positively impact the creation of jobs by injecting resources into local communities.

Participants cited a number of national measures that could improve the education-to-work transitions. Specifically, many highlighted the need for improved, and appropriate, technical and vocational education and training in most public education systems. Partnerships with the private sector through tax incentives, transition-to-work schemes, "junior entrepreneur" programmes, apprenticeship schemes (e.g., the dual-training system in Germany) or volunteering programmes (Ghana, Liberia) were highlighted as best practices. In Argentina, the "Young People with More and Better Jobs" programme provide young people with job training and assistance to enter the labour market, bolstered by an economic allowance. During economic downturns, these kinds of initiatives help reduce losses in human capital by keeping workers' skills up-to-date.

Informal economy

The majority of people in developing countries work in the informal economy. Although participants overwhelmingly saw the formalization and security of productive employment for all as a long-term objective, they also argued for a better understanding of the informal sector, which plays an important role in providing jobs and livelihoods for workers in developing countries. A number of policies could help those working in the informal sector secure productive employment, such as support in starting and scaling up businesses, entrepreneurship and management skills or enhancing access to start-up resources, such as land or initial capital. As one participant noted:

"The informal labour sector everywhere is testimony to the creative spirit and serviceability of young people...[A] key issue is how to 'decent-ize' existing working conditions both for those now deeply underemployed, and also for those coming into the labour force... [M]uch of this is legal and regulatory, where the ILO has a strong role in its tripartite arrangement. Much of the 'coping' strategies in government however will rest on public sector employees with policy responsibilities who see how their children/grandchildren face the threat directly." – John Lawrence

Public policies should be designed to protect informal sector workers through the provision of basic social safety nets. Particular attention should be paid to women and youth who are overrepresented in the informal sector. Brazil and Indonesia were named as two countries that have rolled out successful social protection programmes alongside rising employment and wages in the formal sector.

Agriculture and rural development

The agricultural sector continues to employ most of the poor in many developing countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Young people are often employed in this sector as well. As such, the sector has great potential for promoting growth, poverty eradication and food security. However, this requires greater investment. According to contributors, infrastructure investment in goods like roads and irrigation systems generally produce high yields. The state has a critical role to play as: (i) investor, (ii) marketer for bringing private sector investments and (iii) regulator to ensure the quality of jobs created. This will help raise agricultural productivity. At the same time, other sectors need to be developed to facilitate migration of excess labour from agriculture to more productive sectors.

Contributors also noted that agricultural workers in developing countries need insurance against crop failures or natural disasters. Experience with micro-insurance in India, for example, has proven its effectiveness in increasing rural workers' resilience to income insecurity caused by natural disasters.

Micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME) development

Building inclusive financial sectors through instruments such as microfinance and cooperative banking is an important source of credit for would-be entrepreneurs in developing countries. This has knock-on effects for job creation, since the opening and growth of micro, small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs) is one of the principal generators of employment in developing countries.

Lack of access to financial services effectively prevents women and youth from increasing agricultural production or starting an MSME – two areas where the greatest potential for employment creation exists. One of the measures cited was the creation of a special fund to finance seed capital for MSME development, including the use of special funding vehicles for women and youth (e.g., ILO's [Women's Entrepreneurship Development](#)).

The Philippines presents an interesting and comprehensive approach to MSME development. The MSME Action Plan, developed by the government, aims at improving entrepreneurship skills, facilitating access to funding, assuring a fair share of government's contracts, and promoting linkages between large and small enterprises.

Youth entrepreneurship policies are being promoted in numerous African countries, including Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, South Africa, Niger and Ghana. Important gaps in the enabling environment for MSME development include the ability to scale up successful MSMEs, access to and expertise in new technologies and establishing linkages with export markets.

Incentives for firms to hire young people should be used to counter systemic discrimination, based on age or lack of experience. As the largest provider of skills for most young people working in informal-sector MSMEs, apprenticeships in those enterprises offer huge potential for improving young people's skills development, entrepreneurship skills and decent work prospects.

Community-based social programmes were also cited as important policies to support the creation of decent work. Programmes in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Malawi have experience with social mobilization campaigns that successfully helped women in poor communities form cohesive self-help groups. These groups inspired a number of their members to develop MSMEs, thanks to their access to pooled savings, credit and education and training. Other community based social programmes offer skills and literacy training to enable enterprise development.

Social protection and health

Many participants emphasized the need for improvements in social protection and social assistance schemes, especially for the most vulnerable groups of population. Existing schemes also need to be extended to the informal economy. Maternal or childcare, as well as wage-legislation could help women balance unpaid household responsibilities and paid work. Social protection helps insure those at risk of poverty against various risks, including an unexpected decline in wages, periods of illness and other household emergencies.

Poor health leads to loss of workdays and lower productivity, with important implications for public investment in health as a means to creating more efficient labour markets. In addition, lack of adequate nutrition or exposure to disease at a young age leads to weakened health in adulthood, which reduces work opportunities and results in lower wages. Medical bills could also be extremely costly and damage a poor household's ability to save. In this regard, public health care programmes allow disadvantaged groups to have access to medical care and lower their financial vulnerability. Prevention and immunization against common diseases is proven to have large social benefits, which is much less costly to the government in the long run. As already mentioned, in many countries conditional cash transfers are successfully used for prevention (e.g., through check-ups, immunization). Access to safe water and sanitation systems is another factor that helps people stay healthy and should therefore be supported by the state.

Productive investment and public works

In general, discussants recommend a custom-tailored policy mix that would support domestic industries, public investments, and private sector development. Public investments are important in particular for technical and vocational education and training; agriculture and infrastructure development. Active labour market policies (ALMPs) and social safety nets are productive investments that help ease the impacts of economic downturns and address existing mismatch between jobs and skills. For example, public works are a common means of generating employment by the state to create public goods (e.g., infrastructure, environmental rehabilitation). At the same time they serve as a countercyclical measure to ameliorate impacts of economic crisis, conflict or other adverse shocks. However, some participants noted that the long-run effect of these schemes on employment is unclear.

These programmes can be designed to target a specific group, e.g., women or youth. The South African's Expanded Public Works Programme provides jobs to poor workers, especially women, who otherwise would not be able to find jobs in the private sector. In India, in 2005, a right to employment law (NREGA) was enacted, guaranteeing publicly funded paid work (unskilled) for 100 days at the statutory minimum wage and requiring at least one-third of those workers to be women.

Migration

Labour migration is a policy area that requires innovative action at the bilateral, regional and international levels. If designed well, migration policy can help safeguard the working conditions of both local and migrant workers. Considering that young people are more inclined to migrate in order to find jobs, migration policy is an important area of consideration within the youth unemployment agenda. New Zealand's Recognised Seasonal Employer Work Policy offers avenues for the temporary cross-border transfer of agricultural labour from Pacific Island countries. More recently, the Pacific Financial Inclusion Programme – a joint endeavour of UNDP, the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and several bilateral development partners -- has invested in financial literacy of the beneficiaries of the seasonal employment scheme so that they could eventually move up the skills ladder and consider opening MSMEs upon returning home.

Institutions, governance and political will

The quality of institutions and governance matters as well. Sound regulatory and judiciary systems and stable, representative political institutions tend to be more conducive to investments and creation of decent jobs. According to one participant:

"Being totally naive I firmly believe rapid growth and rising levels of decent work and living standards is a feasible agenda; it has worked in the past; and can work again, but political will and institutions have to be up to the task. In this the UN can help, but cannot substitute for those." - Philippe Egger

In most countries, the private sector remains the primary employer. Private sector development and investments can be facilitated through increased government transparency, better access to credit, improved protection of property rights, and the use of tax benefits to hire workers or to reduce bureaucracy to start an enterprise, among other strategies.

The weak political empowerment and representation of women in national institutions, such as parliament or civil service, represents an additional constraint to creating the right enabling environment. Advocacy work and special measures (e.g., quotas) could have a positive impact on their inclusion. In Pacific Island countries, UNDP Pacific Centre with support from country offices, regional organizations and UN Women has been advocating for women's political representation and participation in economic activities. Advocacy measures could also be applied in countries where customary laws impede women's access to education, obtaining land, credit, information and/or medical care.

National institutions should also safeguard international labour standards and international instruments (e.g, in relation to women, such as the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women or relevant ILO Conventions on Gender Equality in the World of Work).

Social dialogue

The importance of policy coordination and social dialogue to the attenuation of the jobs crisis proved its relevance during the global recovery. It would seem that the key challenge is not the choice of the precise policy instrument (there are many) but the ability to get them to work coherently. Improvements in social protection, and increases in minimum wages, for instance, are not necessarily damaging to enterprise development if done with the concerns of smaller firms in mind and alongside business' support programmes. After all, improved household incomes generate consumer demand and boost firms' sales. However, to work well, social dialogue and collective bargaining need strong and representative workers and employers' organizations. In many contexts, unions and employers face major challenges and would need support and encouragement to increase their presence and weight in the policymaking realm.

Policy coherence and partnerships

Given that employment is a complex phenomenon affected by numerous institutions, policies towards job creation cannot be solely the responsibility of Ministries of Labour. Rather, employment goals should be mainstreamed into the work of government as a whole. Employment strategies are likely to be more successful where there is coordination and coherence across ministries, including education and health. South Africa's strategy on human resources development is an example of a national attempt to operationalize this idea. However, it is important that one government agency which has the appropriate technical capacity and the ability to gather political support, holds an oversight role to ensure efficient coordination of sectoral policies.

In the same vein, an economic development approach that involves all key stakeholders has the potential for boosting inclusive economic growth and employment. While public policies can make a difference, economic activities themselves need to generate remunerative work and good working

conditions. Therefore building linkages between government, private sector and the labour unions is critical.

Role of the UN and international agencies

Participants suggested a few areas where the UN and other international actors could add value to the promotion of full and productive employment. The UN is well-placed to facilitate and advocate for national debates and dialogue on employment. For example, in Mozambique, UNDP is undertaking the development of a National Human Development Report (HDR) on the challenges of job creation, in particular for women and youth. The recent HDR from Jordan highlights the essential role played by micro, small and medium enterprises in the promotion of human development in the country.

In its work at the national level, ILO should not restrict itself to the Ministries of Labour but partner with other relevant line ministries and government agencies. One participant stated:

"Employment creation is the preserve of, as you say, many agencies. There is definitely a need to bring such agencies together in debates on employment and once I suggested the need for a 'World Employment Organisation'. Perhaps this could be done by extending ILO representation but would probably need more such as high level involvement from the IMF, WTO and the regional banks as well as the UN and its agencies such as UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, etc." – Michael Hopkins

Data collection and research on employment should remain a priority for UN and other international agencies. Relevance of the information to policy-making should be ensured through the best empirical evidence and open and transparent knowledge easily available to governments. Discussants recommend more research that examines the different inter-linkages between employment and human development indicators such as health, education, literacy, levels of corruption, political participation, etc.

Finally, UN agencies are in a unique position to be able to promote global labour standards and regulations, while showing the positive impact on growth, employment and increased equality.

IV. Recommendations emerging from the discussion

Put productive employment and decent work at the centre of growth and development strategies

- Employment and poverty reduction objectives should be better integrated into national macroeconomic frameworks and development strategies. This will require a shift from macroeconomic policymaking, which is exclusively concerned with tight fiscal and monetary policy and low inflation targets, toward a framework for public and private investment resulting in job creation, productivity gains and poverty reduction.
- Pursue a country-specific policy mix that would support public investments and private sector development, with a specific focus – particularly in developing countries – on investment in education and training; agriculture and infrastructure development.
- Employment goals should be mainstreamed into the work of government as a whole and is likely to be more successful where there is coordination and coherence across government ministries. At the same time, it is recommended that one government ministry or agency develop the oversight and technical capacity to ensure the efficient coordination of policies pertaining to employment.

Promote full and productive employment for women and young people

- National employment strategies should set clear targets for women and youth, which will help identify progress and challenges, improve the use of resources for programmes targeting these groups and help lower the systemic labour market barriers to their employment.
- The weak political empowerment and representation of women in national institutions, such as parliament or civil service, represents an additional constraint to creating the right enabling environment. The voice and representation of women and youth should be increased in legislature, trade unions and employers associations and through other channels that lead to policy formulation.
- Equal opportunities for women in accessing jobs could be fostered by enforcing national affirmative action policies in hiring, wage legislation - including equal pay, equal access to education, and the promotion of civil rights. Advocacy work and special measures (e.g., quotas) could have a positive impact on their inclusion.

Create an enabling environment where micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) can thrive

- MSMEs are an important source of job creation and employment in most countries and, in particular, developing countries. Increase access to low-cost domestic sources of finance for productive investment. Governments have an important role to play by encouraging credit flows – either through regulatory frameworks or keeping bank lending rates low – toward strategically important sectors and activities. For example, special public funds could be established in order to stimulate and guarantee bank loans linked to MSME development.
- Improve the productivity of MSMEs by enhancing their access to skills development, training and entrepreneurial education. Regional small business development centres, backed by government-guaranteed loans, grants and advisory services. Upgrade informal apprenticeships programmes, which serve as the largest source of skills development in MSMEs. At the same time, address the weaknesses of this system and how they can be improved to ensure smoother pathways to decent work, including through the development of skills for new occupations in the green economy.
- Strengthen cooperatives and/or alliances between small producers along value chains and clusters, which can lead to externalities and higher productivity and innovation.
- Governments should identify and register MSMEs in order to know their characteristics and to understand better how the informal sector interacts with other sectors of the economy. The high cost of registration for many MSMEs in the informal sector needs to be taken into consideration.

Focus on the quality of jobs and livelihoods to ensure inclusive growth

- The private sector should be encouraged to work with the public sector to enhance productive employment. Corporate social responsibility has shown that the pure pursuit of short-term profit is not in the long-term interests of actually making sustainable profits.
- Countries should ensure that social security and social protection policies are expanded in line with national priorities, with a minimum level of income security and access to medical care for all, specifically those working in agriculture or sectors dominated by migrant or seasonal work.

- National institutions should safeguard international labour standards and international instruments, appropriate to countries' levels of development. To work well, social dialogue and collective bargaining need strong and representative worker and employer organizations.
- Advance rights-based, innovative migration policies at the bilateral, regional and international levels to safeguard the working conditions of both local and migrant workers.

Highlight the global jobs crisis on the international development agenda

- The United Nations system has a central role to play in facilitating and advocating for policy dialogue on employment. The Global Jobs Pact offers a framework for building productive capacities which can support employment, trigger structural change and contribute to poverty reduction.
- The UN system should stand behind countries' efforts to integrate cross-sectoral policies with an impact on employment, including through providing constructive policy and practical platforms which allow for knowledge-sharing and the exchange of best practices.
- The UN system and other international organizations should strengthen countries' capacities in research, data collection and technical expertise on productive employment. In particular, the policy and research agendas should further examine the inter-linkages between employment and human development indicators, such as health, education, literacy and levels of corruption or political participation.

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