

**United Nations Peacebuilding Commission
Sierra Leone Configuration**

**Supporting the Government of Sierra Leone
and its international partners
to generate employment for the youth**

Preface

This document has been prepared by the Peacebuilding Support Office to assist the Chair and Members of the Sierra Leone Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in their work on mobilizing resources in support of the efforts of the Government of Sierra Leone and its international partners to generate employment among the youth (15 to 35 years of age).

The document draws on: 1. the discussion that took place during the Regional Seminar on 'Strategies and Lessons Learned on Sustainable Reintegration and Job Creation: What Works in West Africa' held in Freetown, Sierra Leone on 2 and 3 December 2010; and 2. the background paper prepared by Sierra Leone's international partners (UN, World Bank, German Development Cooperation, IFAD and EU) for the seminar¹.

Youth and employment in Sierra Leone

1. It is estimated that 800,000 youth (15 to 35 years of age) or over 60% of the youth are either unemployed or underemployed. Over 50% of the population of Sierra Leone in this age group is illiterate. There is a severe shortage in skills that are and are going to be demanded by the market. Both factors reduce considerably youth employability. Economic growth of 7% per year for ten years is deemed necessary to create sufficient jobs to absorb idle youth.

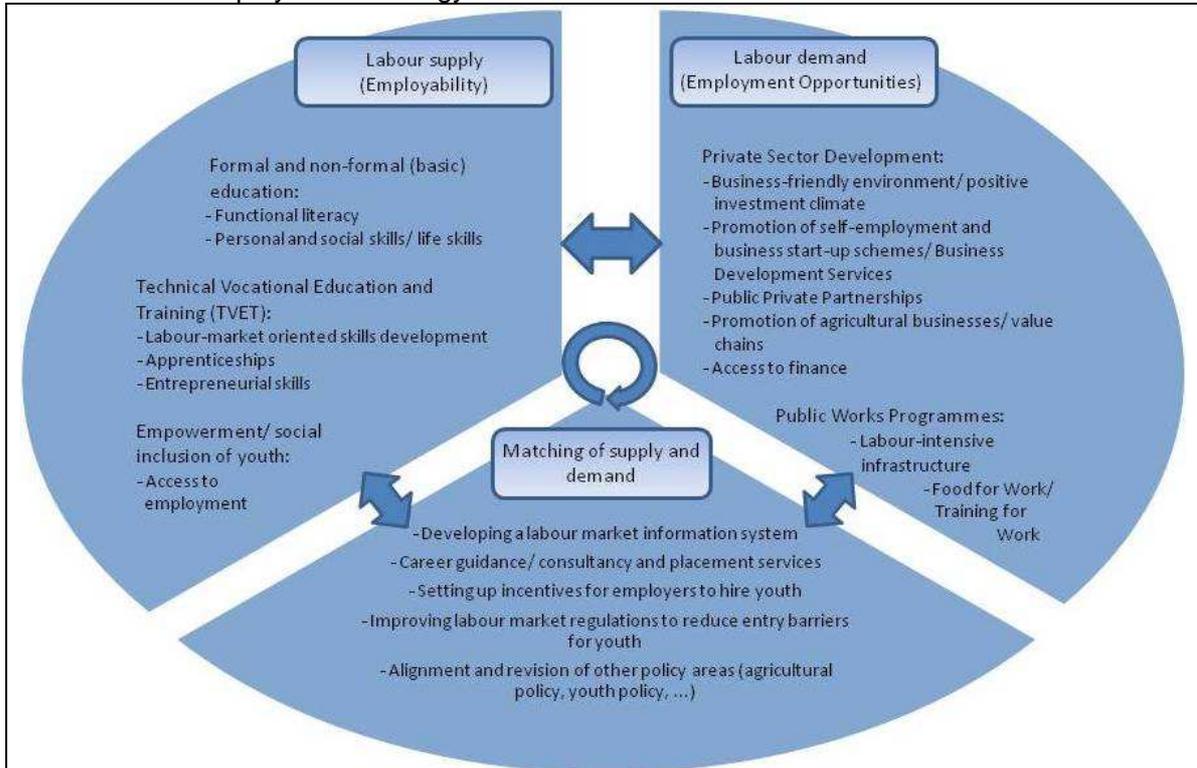
2. In Sierra Leone's post-conflict setting the risk exists for the youth to be drawn into politically motivated violence, particularly over the coming months in which situations related to the elections of 2012 could provide an excuse for violence. A Government official mentioned with concern that the number of unemployed youth in Sierra Leone today is similar to pre civil war levels.

3. To address the problem, the Government of Sierra Leone has recently revised and improved its Youth Employment Strategy by placing more emphasis on labor demand

¹ To obtain additional information on the seminar and relevant documentation kindly contact Stefania Piffanelli in the Peacebuilding Support Office at piffanelli@un.org.

and on better matching supply and demand (box 1). In November 2009 Parliament has approved the establishment of a National Youth Commission (NYC) aimed at coordinating the work of all relevant Government Ministries seized with youth employment matters. On 4 December 2010, the President of Sierra Leone has established the Ministry of Youth Employment and Sports.

Box 1: Youth Employment Strategy of the Government of Sierra Leone



4. The international community has been active in the area of youth employment with a significant number of worthy but relatively small scale projects, which, absent an overall strategy, have not fully exploited potential complementarities and linkages. More than 85% of youth employment projects have focused on improving “employability” (mainly skill training) without linking the training to the business market and the labor demand (the Republic of Sierra Leone, Joint Progress Report on the Agenda for Change, page 93).

5. Sierra Leone’s international partners on the ground work in full coordination – providing a best practice in international assistance. In preparation for the seminar held in December 2010, the main partners working on youth employment put together a document which offered a comprehensive analysis of the labor market in Sierra Leone, and drew lessons from the experience of the international community with youth employment since the end of the civil war. The main message is that not enough is known about the status of the labor market in the country and that the many experiences should be better analyzed and future interventions should better adhere to an overall strategy. Accordingly, over the coming two years the UN and other international partners will, on the one hand, support the Government develop an employment strategy with

particular attention at the labor demand and, on the other hand, implement quick impact projects, including scaling up of successful interventions.

6. However, only the private sector has the potential to generate enough jobs in a country as richly endowed in natural resources as Sierra Leone. While the business environment in Sierra Leone has been progressively improving over time, the country ranks 143 out of 183 countries in the doing business index of the World Bank. It ranks comparatively better among African countries: 20 out of 46; and among low income countries: 16 out of 37.

7. The extractive industry and agriculture carry the best hopes for youth employment. It is estimated that, starting in a couple of years, some of the extractive and agricultural multinational corporations operating in Sierra Leone will offer thousands of jobs. Thousand other jobs could be created by a number of large scale investments that are in the negotiation stage.

8. Between now and the 2012 elections, the Government of Sierra Leone with the support of its international partners, including the PBC, has an important window of opportunity to offer hope to the youth on their future prospects. Such hope can only come through a combination of medium- to long-term and more structural interventions, on the one hand, and short-term visible activities, on the other hand, that offer more job opportunities.

9. The strength of the PBC Sierra Leone Configuration resides with its members and with the resources, experience and expertise that each member individually and collectively can contribute. Resources can come in many forms: financial, in kind, knowledge sharing and transfer, technical assistance, training, partnerships and others.

Some ideas for resource mobilization by the PBC

10. The PBC is uniquely positioned to engender the opportunities for resources to be mobilized by a wide range of actors interested or invested in Sierra Leone, including Governments, international organizations, philanthropic and non-profit institutions, the private sector, multinational corporations, NGOs, universities, business and technical schools.

Partnership for job creation in Sierra Leone

Below are examples of partnerships for youth employment

Equip young Sierra Leoneans to work for multinational corporations

It is estimated that starting in a couple of years some of the extractive and agricultural ventures presently operating in Sierra Leone will start hiring in large numbers. For example, Addax biofuels is expected to create 4,000 jobs, FNP Agricultural Company plans to provide over 10,000 jobs and African Minerals 11,000 jobs. A number of large scale investments that are in the negotiation stage have projected to create many thousands of jobs.

However, Sierra Leoneans will likely be hired mostly for manual jobs, while more technical and managerial positions would go to expatriates from the region as Sierra Leoneans are unlikely to possess the required skills. There exists a window of opportunity of a couple of years to train technicians and middle-level managers from Sierra Leone through a range of learning methods, including in class training and apprenticeship. Members of the Sierra Leone Configuration could explore whether their universities and technical schools could provide knowledge and training in the areas that are going to be demanded in the extractive and agricultural sector. The curricula for such training could be prepared jointly with the multinational corporations operating in Sierra Leone. In turn, multilateral corporations could provide the

funding for the training and commit to hire a number of Sierra Leoneans apprentices to become a cadre of technicians and managers in the company.

Build excellence in public administration

PBC members could offer exchange programmes for public administrators, including those civil servants in charge of negotiating contracts with multinational corporations, and sponsor teachers and programmes in Sierra Leonean's schools for public administrators.

Strengthen learning institutions in Sierra Leone

Universities in PBC member countries could forge partnerships with the University of Sierra Leone to build capacity and knowledge in areas of expertise demanded by the market and by the public sector.

Philanthropic organizations to garner the energy of innovators and entrepreneurs

Philanthropic organizations are and can become very important partners in job creation. Collaboration with philanthropic foundations can lead to interesting partnerships between the various actors playing in the labor market. Among such actors are the innovators and the entrepreneurs. There exists a number of networks of young innovators and entrepreneurs, some of them targeting women only. There is also a critical mass of them who is willing to participate to Sierra Leone's development by contributing pro-bono their time, experience and knowledge. A partnership could be envisaged between these networks and the philanthropic foundations to push the barriers of technical cooperation into more innovative areas.

Train trainers in areas demanded by the market

While through surveys and anecdotal evidence it is known what fields are more likely to guarantee a livelihood, the international community has often provided training in such fields as carpentry, blacksmithing and hairdressing, although such professions may not necessarily provide a livelihood. This supply-driven approach has been often dictated by shortage of trainers in more profitable professions.

The members of the Sierra Leone Configuration could help address the shortage of trainers in profitable areas of expertise in which the market has an interest. Exchange programmes with schools and universities in the region and beyond could be explored to train trainers. A number of PBC members could consider pulling together resources to provide the technical expertise, equipment and financial resources necessary to implement 'training of trainers' programmes. Entrepreneurs from the region and beyond who are ready to contribute their experience pro bono could be considered as resources.

New international partners

The geography of donors is changing rapidly and as rapidly are changing international interests in Sierra Leone. More developed countries in the region and the continent as well as large emerging economies are strengthening their economic ties with Sierra Leone. These non-traditional partners are all members of the Sierra Leone Configuration and all have resources to contribute, including their development experience, technical expertise and private sector investment.

11. The Sierra Leone Configuration of the PBC at its meeting of 29 September 2010 agreed to strengthen its efforts toward mobilizing resources for peace consolidation in Sierra Leone. Addressing the high rate of unemployment among the youth is considered a critical priority for peace consolidation. The Chair of the Configuration visited Sierra Leone in December 2010 to discuss with all relevant counterparts how the Commission can help mobilize resources.

12. Sierra Leone has now in place the strategy and the institutions required to tackle the high rate of youth unemployment. Its business environment has been progressively improving. Its projected growth rates is around and above 6% per year and its natural resource base has caught the attention of several multinational corporations.

13. The international partners in the country are fully coordinated and have over time developed an understanding of what works in the area of youth employment and of how to work together in adherence to one overall strategy.

14. Resources appear to be the binding constraint limiting the potential of the youth of Sierra Leone.

15. A list of possible actions by the Sierra Leone Configuration to mobilize resources² for youth employment is provided below. The list is by no means comprehensive. It is hoped it can spur discussion on this issue.

16. Actions by the Chair of the Sierra Leone Configuration:

- i. **Gather, consolidate and package information, with the support of the PBSO, coming from the Government of Sierra Leone and its international partners on resource requirements (including financial, in kind, knowledge, technical assistance, partnerships) to create jobs for the youth (15-35 years of age).**
- ii. **Advocate and disseminate information on resource requirements to targeted potential resource contributors.**
- iii. **Work with the IFIs, World Bank, IMF, AfDB, ADB and others, to explore ways to further strengthen their investment in Sierra Leone and in particular on youth employment creation.**
- iv. **Engender links and partnership between the Government of Sierra Leone and potential contributors.**
- v. **Conduct periodic follow-up with potential resource contributors.**

17. Actions by the individual members of the Sierra Leone Configuration:

- i. **In alignment with resource requirements compiled by the Chair, make a case in their own respective countries with: Government; private sector; multinational corporations invested or interested in investing in Sierra Leone and headquartered in countries members of the Configuration; technical schools and universities particularly in fields related with the extractive industry and with agriculture; business schools; philanthropic, non-profit and non-governmental organizations; networks of innovators and entrepreneurs;**

In order to:

- a. **offer university sponsorship for senior level management and technical operators to work in the new international investments in agriculture and the extractive industry (short-term activity);**
- b. **support to the University of Sierra Leone to develop courses in disciplines demanded by the market, particularly in the area of agriculture and the extractive industry (medium- to long-term activity);**
- c. **Support to Technical and Vocational Training centers to provide technical training on skills that are in demand by the new international investments, e.g., heavy duty equipment operators and mechanics, IT;**
- d. **Promote new investment in Sierra Leone, e.g., sponsor trade missions, invitation to the Sierra Leone Investment and Promotion Agency to visit their country and meet with potential investors and social entrepreneurs;**

² The term resource includes financial and in kind contribution; technical assistance; transfer of knowledge and know how; as well as forms of partnership

