



International
Labour
Organization



Promoting Youth Employment in Fragile Settings

Introduction

An estimated 600 million young people¹ live in contexts characterised by fragility. In these contexts, absent or extremely weak institutions and poor delivery of state functions (security, welfare, justice, representation) feed chronic or recurrent vulnerability and instability (ILO, 2016a). From the perspective of the world of work, this translates into the extent to which labour market actors are no longer able to provide and/or access decent job opportunities.

Most vulnerable members of society, particularly youth, disproportionately feel the different impacts of fragility. Young women and men living in fragile settings² face several job market barriers that inhibit their ability to engage in productive activities and earn an income, including physical and psychological scars, crippling social norms and customs, failure of national policies, and security concerns. Fragility therefore affects employment outcomes for young people in terms of both availability and quality of jobs, and aggravates pre-existing youth employment obstacles (ILO, 2016a). This jeopardises the prospects of young generations,

¹ For the purposes of this paper, we use the terms “youth” and “young people” interchangeably to characterize young persons from 15 to 24 years inclusive, unless otherwise specified.

² In this note, “fragile settings” and “fragile contexts” signify prolonged exposure to conflicts or natural disasters and their effects.

trapping them in a vicious cycle of conflict, disaster and poverty and laying the foundation for further social instability.

On the other hand, fragility may present opportunities for social, economic and political improvements, as societies in post-crisis environments are often more receptive to change. Effective and sustainable responses require the adoption of people-centred solutions to reduce vulnerability, strengthen coping mechanisms, foster good governance, and rebuild trust and confidence. Decent and stable jobs offer crisis-affected people not only income, but also freedom, security, dignity, self-esteem, hope, and a stake in the reconciliation and reconstruction of their societies. In this context, supporting the socio-economic integration or re-integration of young women and men increases their ownership of local recovery processes and allows them to become active participants in the rebuilding of their communities.

This technical note³ underscores the value of employment-based interventions in situations of fragility, for youth and the broader society. The note presents relevant policy frameworks, as well as operational approaches and tools applied in addressing the need of young women and men exposed to the consequences of conflicts and natural disasters. Drawing on ILO knowledge and country experiences, it offers insights for policy advice and programme making.

I. Young people in fragile contexts

Youth are a highly heterogeneous group characterized by diverse profiles, backgrounds, experiences, challenges and needs. In fragile settings, young people normally face specific constraints (see [Figure 1](#)) as they may be among ex-combatants, forcibly displaced persons (refugees, internally displaced persons), migrants, or returnees in the aftermath of conflicts or natural disasters.

Because of the hardships they face, young people in fragile contexts are often perceived as an ‘at-risk’ group. Male youth in particular are stigmatised as they have been observed to be drivers of political and criminal violence (Urdal, 2012). This view however fails to acknowledge the youth demographic dividend prevalent in many developing countries and its potential contribution to development and social cohesion. It also underestimates the cost of neglecting youth employment, which can have adverse implications and become a source of social and political unrest (World Bank, 2011; Blattman & Ralston, 2015; Brück et al., 2016; and Idris, 2016).

³ This note builds on and complements the chapter on “Youth employment in conflict and fragile settings”, in the ILO book “Youth Employment Policies for Evolving Labour Markets” (forthcoming).

Figure 1: Specific constraints faced by youth in fragile contexts

Young ex combatants • Stigmatization from the community, lack of social skills, fear for retaliation, negative perceptions and social exclusion • Post-conflict traumatic disorder and stress of past events • Lack of skills training and lack of education • Inadequate access to health care and support given limited financial capacity • Disabled ex combatants have insufficient medical assistance, rehabilitation assistance and less access to livelihood • Political exclusion, issues of representation, equality, association and reconciliation • Lack of agency rank and limited decision making ability Adapted from: Chigunta, F. 2006. The creation of Job/Work opportunities and Income Generating Activities for Youth in Post Conflict Countries. UN; and Robins et al. 2016. Poverty, stigma and alienation: reintegration challenges of ex Maoist combatants in Nepal. Berghof Foundation	Refugee youth, young migrants and young returnees • Lack of legal recognition • Lack of access to youth sensitive healthcare including psycho-social support • Lack of access to quality education, learning and skills training opportunities • Lack of safety, shelter, security and freedom of movement • Discrimination and culture clash • Few available youth employment and livelihood opportunities • Gender inequality, exploitation and violence including for LGBTI youth • Protection and practical challenges for unaccompanied youth including difficult transitions and lack of preparation • Lack of participation opportunities and ability to be involved in decision making • Lack of information about asylum, refugee rights and available services Source: UNHCR, 2016. Believe in youth: global refugee youth consultations. Final Report.
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Assessing the impact of crises on the community or society is essential to devise appropriate entry points for action and to determine the level of resources and tools to deploy in a given context. The ILO conducts needs and damage assessments⁴ during the aftermath of crises in order to orient the response to the adverse impacts of a conflict or disaster. In doing so, it formulates an estimation of reintegration, rehabilitation and development needs of all members of the society, including youth, in the medium and long term. This analysis is supplemented by a thorough examination of the coping capacities of institutions and local networks during the post crisis phase. [Figure 2](#) includes the elements of a post-crisis needs assessment that may include youth-specific considerations⁵.

⁴ For a detailed example on a damage/needs assessment focussing on youth, refer to: ILO, 2016. [Yemen Damage and Needs Assessment: Crisis Impact on Employment and Labour Market](#). Beirut.

⁵ ILO et al. [Employment, livelihood and social protection: PDNA Guidelines Volume B](#); ILO (2001). [Rapid Needs Assessment Manual: recovery and reconstruction](#). Geneva; and ILO (2001). [ILO Generic crisis response modules](#). Geneva.

Figure 2: Elements of a post-crisis needs assessment



Source: ILO

II. Some relevant policy frameworks and approaches

Policy frameworks and approaches relevant to the promotion of youth employment in fragile settings include:

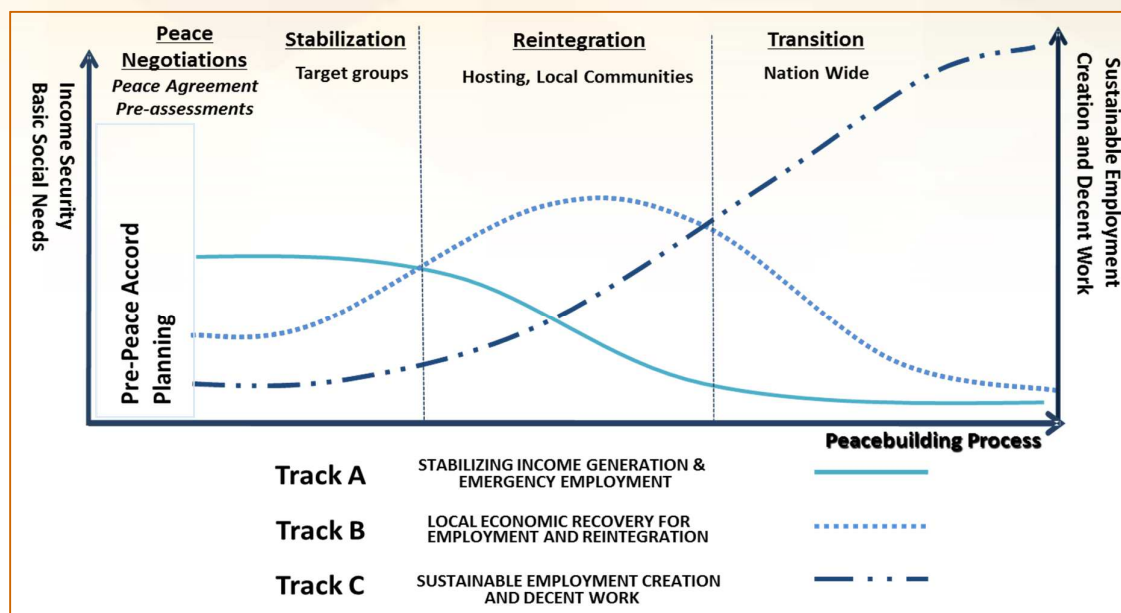
- The ground-breaking **United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015) on Youth, Peace and Security** recognises the pivotal role of young women and men in preventing conflict and sustaining peace. More specifically, it emphasises the importance of creating policies aimed at social and economic development, local growth, youth employment and vocational training, both to prevent conflict, and to foster the disengagement and reintegration of ex-combatants.
- The ongoing implementation of the **Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security**, which reaffirms the importance of women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, follows along the same lines by advancing the inclusion of women and young women in conflict prevention and resolution, peace negotiations, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and post-conflict reconstruction.
- **The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** calls for “leaving no one behind” and “reaching the furthest behind first”, by acknowledging that fragility, vulnerability, inequality and a lack of decent work opportunities remain the greatest impediments to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this respect, considering youth as part of the solution to respond to current crises, mitigate future conflicts and enhance community resilience is particularly relevant to the objectives of i) ending poverty in all its forms everywhere (SDG 1); ii) promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent

work for all (SDG 8); iii) reducing inequality within and among countries (SDG 10); iv) taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (SDG 13); and v) promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (SDG 16). Actions that promote employment and decent work for youth in contexts of fragility leverage the interconnected nature of SDGs and contribute to realising the transformative potential of the 2030 Agenda.

- In 2008, building on decades of work on the crucial link between employment and peacebuilding, the ILO and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) jointly led the development of the **United Nations Policy for Post-Conflict Employment Creation, Income Generation and Reintegration**, a result of the committed effort of 20 UN agencies, funds and programmes which recognised the vital role of employment to ensure stability, reintegration, socioeconomic growth and sustainable peace. Approved in 2009 by the UN Secretary-General, the policy pays special attention to the needs and capacities of conflict-affected groups, in particular unemployed women and youth, and encourages actors in the humanitarian-development nexus to tap into the positive energy and skills of young people to help them escape from the vicious cycle of violence, poverty, illiteracy and social exclusion. The framework laid out by the policy includes three programming tracks (see [Figure 3](#)) to support interventions at the country level. All three tracks promote employment, but each has a different focus, as follows:
 - Track A targets stabilisation by providing quick peace dividends, such as through immediate job creation to kick-start socioeconomic recovery and restore livelihoods;
 - Track B targets local economic recovery and reintegration through capacity development of local governments, authorities and providers of business services, and community-driven investments in socioeconomic infrastructure;
 - Track C targets transition to sustainable employment creation and decent work through the development of enabling policies, support for financial sector and business development services, and the promotion of labour institutions.

The promotion of social dialogue, the protection and respect of fundamental human rights, and special attention to gender equality and marginalised groups are important cross-cutting elements to be reflected thorough the cycle.

Figure 3: The three concurrent tracks of the United Nations Policy for Post-Conflict Employment Creation, Income Generation and Reintegration



In 2016, the ILO intensified its efforts to strengthen the peacebuilding contribution of employment programmes through the establishment of a partnership with the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), the UNDP and the World Bank. The result of the first joint activity - an independent study that culminated in the report “Jobs Aid Peace”⁶ - called for the consistent application of a theoretical framework underpinning the relationship between employment programmes and peace, and highlighted the need and opportunity to extend the empirical evidence on the links between employment programmes and peacebuilding outcomes. While recognising that proof of a direct connection between jobs and peace was scarce and the relationship not always obvious, the joint study developed a **theory of change** (see [Figure 4](#)⁷) to address the following conflict factors:

- o **Lack of opportunity:** the availability of and access to decent employment for ‘at-risk’ youth, including skills training, counselling, job creation and sustainable income, can provide greater economic opportunities and empowerment for young women and men, thereby increasing the opportunity costs of engaging in adverse behaviour.
- o **Lack of contact:** creating constructive contact between rivalling groups by strengthening economic relationships through employment and bringing people together through social dialogue can challenge pre-conceived perceptions and forge

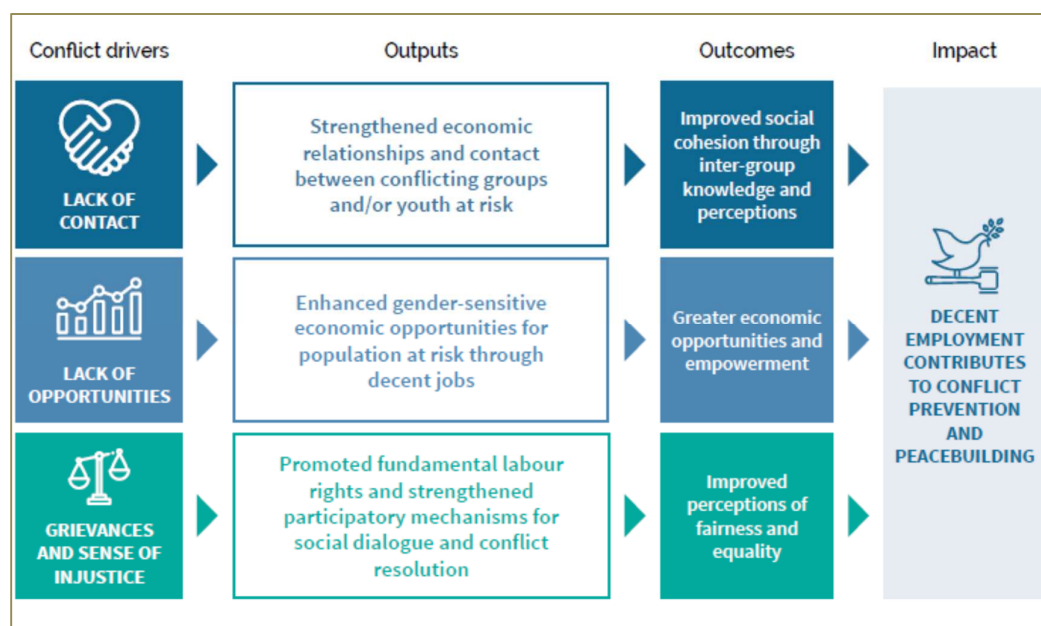
⁶ This translated in the ILO/PBSO/World Bank/UNDP “Employment programmes and peace: A joint statement on an analytical framework, emerging principles for action and next steps. September 2016.

⁷ This adaptation is proposed in: *Youth in fragile situations. Promoting youth employment for peace and resilience*. Thematic priority of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth.

better relationships and mutual understanding that contribute to breaking down sources of division.

- o **Existence of grievances:** the provision of equal, non-discriminatory access to employment and training opportunities to groups that hold resentment over perceptions of unfair treatment and inequality can improve trust in institutions and strengthen participation in social dialogue, thereby improving perceptions of fairness and equality.

Figure 4: How decent employment contributes to peace building - A theory of change



Source: Adapted from Brück et al, 2016

Clearly articulating the theory of change is essential to capture the potential contribution of employment programmes in addressing the root causes of fragility or mitigating its consequences. A thorough design of employment programmes operating in a fragile context leads to the availability of monitoring data and the possibility to evaluate their contribution to peace and resilience with a focus on perceived changes in inter-group relations, economic opportunities and grievances (ILO, 2019a).

- The continued relevance of the ILO's mandate and the central role of employment and decent work in responding to fragile situations have been reaffirmed in 2017 with the adoption of the **Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation (No. 205)**⁸ by the International Labour Conference. The

⁸ A related resource page can be found at: <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/employment-promotion/recovery-and-reconstruction/r205/lang-en/index.htm>

Recommendation provides guidance to ILO's member States on the role of employment and decent work in response to conflicts and disasters, and on the measures to prevent crises, enable recovery, and build peace and resilience. The Recommendation calls for special attention to youth and invites countries to provide income-generation opportunities, stable employment and decent work for young women and men, including through integrated training, employment and labour market programmes and specific employment components in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes.

- The ILO **global flagship programme on Jobs for Peace and Resilience (JPR)**⁹ launched in 2015, adopts an operational approach that translates the normative framework of Recommendation No. 205 into tangible action. The overall goal of the JPR is to contribute to more peaceful and resilient societies through employment and decent work. To that end, it specifically targets vulnerable young women and men in countries affected by conflict and slow-onset disasters, such as those caused by climate change. The JPR combines employment-intensive investments, technical, vocational and entrepreneurial skills training, employment services and private sector and local economic development to achieve the following key objectives:
 - ✓ Providing direct job creation and income security
 - ✓ Enhancing skills for employability
 - ✓ Supporting self-employment, enterprises and cooperatives
 - ✓ Bridging labour supply and demand

The promotion of social dialogue, Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, and institution building form an integral part of the approach which has been piloted in **Central African Republic, Comoros, Myanmar, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Sri Lanka** and replicated in several other countries mainly in Africa, Arab States and Asia.

III. Youth employment interventions in fragile situations

Through its work on the humanitarian-development nexus, the ILO aims to promote sustainable recovery while tackling root causes of fragility, with a focus on the prevention of future crises. In this context, the ILO provides assistance from the immediate post-conflict or post-disaster phase to the longer term using a downstream-upstream approach.

Downstream activities are rapid-impact projects directly targeting the affected populations. They generate jobs and income to contribute to stabilisation, social cohesion and the creation of concrete peace and resilience dividends. **Upstream initiatives** support the establishment, re-establishment or reinforcement of national systems, institutions and policies to create an environment conducive to sustainable employment growth. They include the development of

⁹ For more information on the JPR: https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/how-the-ilo-works/WCMS_495276/lang--en/index.htm

employment recovery strategies; institutional capacity-building to address labour related issues such as employability; social protection and other aspects of labour administration; and the mainstreaming of the Decent Work Agenda into recovery and transition planning.

Working in partnership with countries affected by conflicts and disasters, providing assistance to them in developing coherent and coordinated interventions to promote youth employment has been a priority of the ILO for decades and will remain a critical area of intervention in the coming years. The following sections describe some relevant **types of interventions** and country cases¹⁰.

➔ ***Employment-Intensive Investment (EII) for immediate employment creation***

- The promotion of employment-intensive works in times of crisis links immediate job creation with infrastructure development for economic stabilisation, social and environmental protection, provision of essential services and community cohesion while offering also opportunities for the promotion of enterprises, development of skills and the improvement of working conditions. Experience has demonstrated that **Employment-Intensive Investment Programmes (EIIPs)**, which afford measures for the physical reconstruction of destroyed areas, the restoration of natural resources and the management of the environment for climate change adaptation (See [Box 1](#)), have positive impacts both in pre-disaster preparedness and post-disaster resilience building, and in conflict mitigation and post-conflict recovery and reconstruction (ILO, 2018).
- EIIPs can therefore assist governments in generating emergency livelihood support mechanisms for large numbers of vulnerable young women and men. Employment-intensive approaches applied to rural infrastructure, for example, have proven to generate up to five times more jobs than equipment-intensive methods (ILO, 2013a). By participating in these programmes, young people receive work experience, new skills, incomes above the minimum wage, guidance on occupational safety and health and access to personal protective equipment, health and accident insurance, and social protection.
- While employment intensive works in crisis settings may only grant wage employment for a short period of time, their impact persists in the long term. The infrastructure developed

¹⁰See also: Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth. *Case studies on youth employment in fragile situations*. This joint report by ILO, UNDP and UNHCR presents examples of good practices from around the world, showcasing innovative approaches to youth employment that help to build peace and resilience in fragile and conflict affected situations. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_575629.pdf

through these programmes can create multiplier effects on employment and income by enhancing the economic performance of other sectors. Moreover, the increased purchasing power of those participating in emergency employment schemes helps to stimulate the local economy, leading to the creation of more jobs.

Box 1: Watershed management as part of disaster risk reduction (DRR) – the Haiti experience

Recurring cyclones and hurricanes, with increasing threats from climate change and the intensity and frequency of natural disasters, have compounded the environmental and social impacts, increasing the vulnerability of already poor urban and rural households in Haiti. Considered the most vulnerable of the Caribbean Islands, Haiti's indicators of vulnerability to cyclones is 12.9 out of a scale of 13.

In 2004, Hurricane Jeanne made landfall in Haiti and ripped through the shores of Gonaïves causing heavy mudslides, killing more than 3,000 people in the country and leaving thousands more homeless. As a response, the affected population participated in restoring the extremely fragile and weakened environment around the city in a programme managed by the ILO. In collaboration with EU, IOM, MINUSTAH, UNDP, the NGO CHF/US Aid, and WFP, the ILO led an employment intensive environmental programme in Gonaïves working closely with the Government of Haiti. This programme focused on creating jobs, protecting the environment and building the institutional capacity of local and community actors through 12 federations that were created to focus on six micro-watersheds, a water source for 324,043 inhabitants. As many as 9,000 individuals (54,000 households) directly benefited from the programme through labour-intensive activities (e.g. afforestation and tree nurseries, anti-erosive ditches, reinforcing bridges, river training, etc.). The community contracting approach helped to clarify roles and responsibilities, rights and obligations, and establish technical capacities for environmental protection and maintenance systems. The approach also promoted cooperation among workers, local organizations and their federations, and local authorities and regional technical departments. Seven professional associations were created and began operating, and the 12 federations of local associations which were coordinating all activities, helped to: recruit workers; select foremen; monitor and control wage payments; and manage food distribution (with WFP). The project also contributed to capacity building and social organization, as well as in increased awareness of environmental issues, which has been a key element for sustainable development and the preservation of future livelihoods.

Source: ILO (2018)

➔ ***Skills development for improved employability***

- Although macro-level economic improvements are critical for supporting job growth, this cannot be sustained without skills development. Employment-based solutions to fragility therefore cannot overlook the need for technical and vocational education and training (TVET) of affected populations of all ages, and particularly of young people whose life, education and career paths are disrupted by conflict or disaster. In sudden or protracted crises, women and men, girls and boys may be affected by the interruption of education services for a long period of time, and eventually become school dropouts due to the urgency to earn a living for themselves and their families. Overage youth may find themselves excluded from formal education. Those who have been engaged in informal learning and are looking for a job may experience difficulties with skills recognition, while those who have completed their schooling may lack core work skills (ILO, 2013b). As a

result, young people in crisis settings often form part of the NEET population, join the informal economy for survival or migrate in search of better opportunities.

- In its efforts to promote decent work for youth in fragile environments, the ILO pays considerable attention to the conditions under which education and training are planned and undertaken in the affected communities, ensuring a connection to employers, the quality and relevance of training, and inclusiveness. Interventions integrate hands-on training with livelihood activities, whether in emergency employment, self-employment, micro- and small-enterprise development or infrastructure development, thus combining “learning” with “earning”. Rapid assessments of both the available skills and skills needs arising from market opportunities are conducted in order to build on existing skillsets and identify viable new employment opportunities. Current training and vocational guidance programmes are adapted and adjusted to respond to emerging skills needs for recovery and reconstruction. Certification of skills learned is carried out to enhance employability (see [Box 2](#)).

Box 2: A skills programme for Syrian refugees

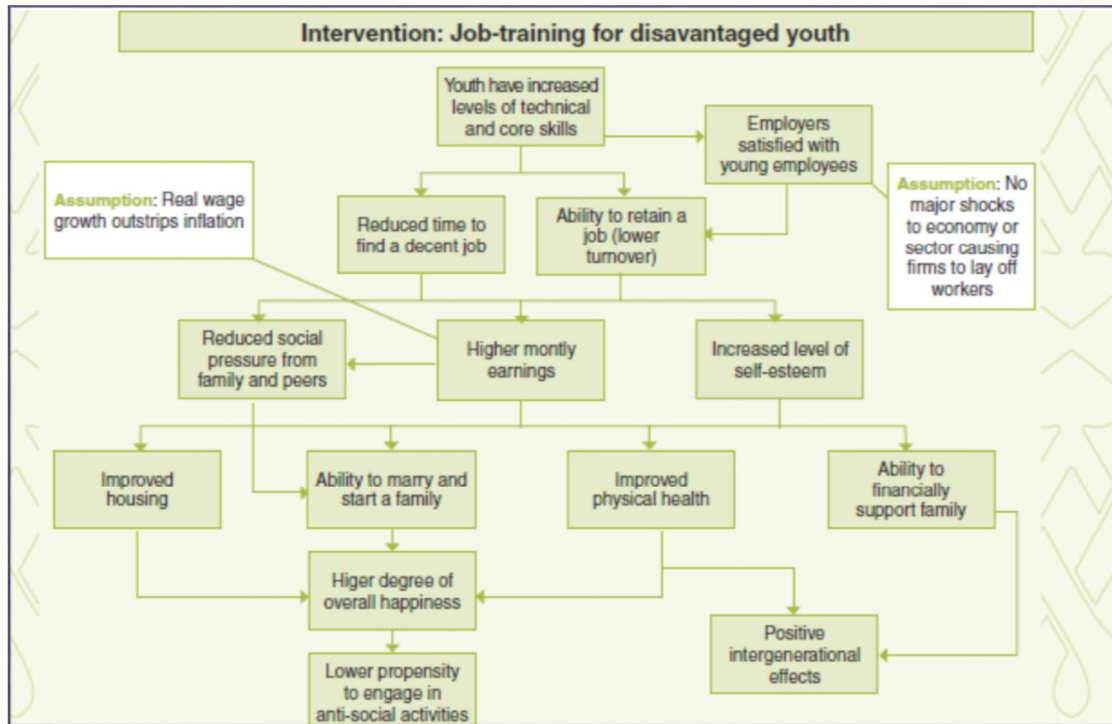
In the context of the Syrian refugee crisis, many Syrians who had sought refuge in Jordan and Lebanon did not have certificates or evidence of qualifications. Furthermore, due to the protracted nature of the conflict, skills erosion is a risk for refugees, given their limited labour market access. At the same time, reconstructing Syria will require numerous qualified workers. In order to address these challenges, the ILO implemented a skills programme for Syrian refugees and Jordanians working in the construction sector in collaboration with the National Employment and Training Company (NET), with the objective of improving workers' employability in occupations that are subject to licensing through an ILO-supported "Recognition of Prior Learning" process. The training courses help refugees upgrade their technical expertise, gain knowledge on OSH, and obtain accredited skills certificates. Thanks to the project, from September to December 2017 certificates were given to 9,200 workers in 14 occupations in the construction sector, increasing their employability, both in the host country and in the event of their return to Syria.

Source: ILO, *Lessons Learned and Emerging Good Practices of ILO's Syria Crisis Response in Jordan and Lebanon*, ILO, Beirut, 2018.

- To support early recovery, short-cycle skills training courses may take place for skills currently unavailable in the market. Enterprises still operating and providing goods and services with market potential are crucial partners to establish quality apprenticeships, either by upgrading informal apprenticeship practices (ILO, 2012a), or by introducing quality apprenticeships as a combination of on-the-job training and school-based education that ensure high levels of instruction and adequate remuneration. To effectively improve employment opportunities for youth, programmes need to be comprehensive and include core skills for employability (often called “soft” skills). As part of these skills, conflict mediation, social awareness, cooperation and personal skills, accompanied by psychosocial support are critical to enable young people to engage in peaceful coexistence and contribute to reconciliation in their own communities (ILO, 2019b).

- In a long-term perspective, training and skills development activities targeting disadvantaged youth can result in individual and societal benefits, as illustrated in the diagram in [Figure 5](#).

Figure 5: Stylized theory of change for a youth employment project



Source: ILO (2018). *Guide on measuring decent jobs or youth*.

➔ **Youth entrepreneurship, mentorships and business development services for self-reliance**

- In the aftermath of conflicts and disasters, the development of sustainable enterprises is an essential tool to support societies in strengthening resilience and transitioning to peace. It is therefore vital to create enabling environments for business and youth-led enterprises, including by building entrepreneurial attitudes, skilling young women and men, and improving their financial literacy to facilitate access to finance.
- To promote rapid recovery of businesses and maximise the peace dividend in post-conflict settings, policies promoting an enabling environment for the private sector need to target conflict-affected groups and focus on the sectors that offer the greatest opportunities for growth and decent work. ILO's initiatives in this area aim to i) support access of micro-, small-scale and medium-scale enterprises (MSME) and women-owned businesses to new local and export markets; ii) support the development of local suppliers through value chain

development; iii) improve productivity through business development services; and iv) facilitate access to credit and financial services as well as to information, technology and entrepreneurship training. The added value of integrating entrepreneurship promotion with access to finance is demonstrated by the higher returns generated on productive work for young people (ILO, 2015b). Assisting youth in disaster settings to access financial resources, for example through the provision of recovery grants or loan guarantees, not only boosts their drive for entrepreneurship and self-employment but also makes a positive impact on their resilience by improving their preparedness, coping capacity and ability to manage risks.

- The following ILO packages have been widely adapted and applied in different contexts:
 - **Know About Business (KAB):** The training aims to build an enterprise culture, through teachers and instructors in public and private TVET institutions, general secondary education and also higher education. Young people enrolled in educational institutions are the primary beneficiaries of KAB training.
 - **Start & Improve Your Business (SIYB):** The SIYB tools and methodologies include four training packages that assist potential young entrepreneurs in generating a feasible business idea, accessing tools to start their business, improving their business performance and expanding their business beyond local communities.
 - **Gender and Entrepreneurship Together (GET Ahead):** Supports women's economic and social empowerment by highlighting essential entrepreneurial skills from a gender perspective. Targeting low-income, semi-literate women who intend to create or are already running micro- and small enterprises, the programme helps them to strengthen their management skills and to grasp opportunities in the business environment.
 - **Financial education programme:** Offers training material designed to teach vulnerable groups including youth about finances. Innovative practices rely, among others, on the use of radio channels and social media in promoting financial literacy with young people.¹¹
- The establishment and development of **cooperatives** is particularly effective in fragile contexts as these enterprises are often able to operate in unstable situations, when other forms of private business may have ceased to function fully. Cooperatives are often chosen by young people in light of their characteristics, such as the collaborative approach they promote which combines self-help with mutual aid; the possibility to circumvent the challenges of establishing new start-ups; and their means to formalise informal work arrangements (ILO, 2012b). In addition, being jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprises, they support trust-building; are schools for democracy; help combat xenophobia and racial, tribal and religious hatred; and rebuild communities (ILO, 2016a).

¹¹ https://www.ilo.org/empent/areas/social-finance/WCMS_714257/lang--en/index.htm

Lessons can be learnt from countries (e.g. Nigeria, Morocco) where state support for youth employment creation programmes was provided in partnership with cooperative organizations¹².

- Besides assisting young people in adapting to volatile situations, business development training in crisis settings can be a strategic component of reconciliation (see [Box 3](#)) and the successful reintegration into civilian life for youth who have been formerly associated with armed forces and groups. As an example, in the eastern **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)**¹³ the ILO has trained demobilised ex-combatants in entrepreneurship and cooperative management, complementing vocational training provided by partner organisations in 11 trades chosen by the beneficiaries according to their interests. The young ex-combatants learned about cooperatives, enterprise development and community activities while they were in the Centre for Preparation and Reintegration mandated to promote social cohesion, peace and community values. In addition to enhancing the livelihood opportunities of the young demobilised soldiers, the project also helped them break down military attitudes, improve their confidence, rebuild constructive relationships with their communities and change their behaviours to promote peaceful coexistence.

Box 3: The Youth Business Sri Lanka (YBSL) programme

The YBSL was a nation-wide expansion of the Hambantota Youth Business Trust (HYBT), which was previously established in southern Sri Lanka by the District Chamber of Commerce with the explicit aim of circumventing the recurrence of youth-led political rebellion (the JVP, a Marxist youth-led political group with a robust presence in the South has rebelled against the state in the late 1970s and again in the 1980s). The Trust's work has helped to shift attitudes towards entrepreneurship in the district (previously many young people from marginalised rural areas considered the private sector as 'class enemies'). The scheme was then expanded to other districts with the support of the ILO and International Alert.

YBSL aspired to act as a platform for inter-regional, inter-ethnic and inter-cultural exchange and reconciliation, where participants from Business Trusts in different districts could congregate and share experiences. It provided mentoring to young entrepreneurs: a process that provided a space for people from different ethnicities, castes, classes, genders and age groups otherwise segregated by conflict to interact. Experienced mentors from Hambantota could guide mentors in other districts, disseminating and sharing best practices across ethnic and local boundaries. There was some evidence that the programme's work resulted in the softening of ideological stances of some youth in Hambantota. Although there were also signs that the interaction between participants from ethnic groups in different districts had facilitated reconciliation and ethnic harmony, it was felt that more in-depth and long term qualitative studies were needed to assess the wider impact of the scheme.

➔ Employment services bridging labour demand and supply

- Fragile contexts are often characterised by dramatic shifts in labour supply and demand, particularly in the phase of rehabilitation and reconstruction. Influxes of crisis-affected

¹² More on cooperatives and youth employment at: https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/cooperatives/areas-of-work/WCMS_553115/lang--en/index.htm

¹³ See at: https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/features/WCMS_575564/lang--en/index.htm

people seeking employment put pressure on the supply side of the market. On the demand side, specific skills are required to support physical reconstruction, the provision of services and the reinvigoration of economic activities.

- **Emergency Public Employment Services (EPES)**, which fall under the umbrella of **active labour market policies (ALMPs)**, are essential in linking job seekers in the affected population, including youth, with temporary work and job training opportunities, thereby contributing to advancing recovery objectives. During and after the recovery period, employment services play a key role in ensuring a more efficient matching of skills and jobs, and in promoting employability and lifelong learning.
- As young people can constitute a significant proportion of job seekers in conflict and disaster settings, EPES may give special assistance to them, in addition to providing general employment assistance to all those affected by crises. In this sense they can offer a range of services that include registering and matching of young jobseekers and vacancies, providing employment orientation and counselling on paid- and self-employment; providing up-to-date labour market information to young jobseekers and employers by conducting rapid needs assessments of local labour markets; referring youth to training options or special employment programmes such as public works or self-employment schemes; administering wage subsidies for young people where available; and preventing discrimination to ensure equal access to job opportunities, among others (ILO, 2003).
- EPES can be activated immediately after a crisis to focus initially on short- and medium-term interventions, prioritise young people or other specific groups, and identify

Box 4: Employment services for youth in Sierra Leone

In 2001, following requests from the government of Sierra Leone, the ILO partnered with the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Industrial Relations in Freetown to launch the Rapid Employment Impact Project (REIP) to facilitate the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone. The project focused on enhancing the capacities of employment information service centres (EISCs) in order to reinforce the effectiveness of these centres in catering to the needs of war affected vulnerable groups. The ILO provided seed funding during the initial stages for the purposes of conducting rapid needs assessments and the formation of a 'pilot' EISC to provide employment services. As part of the broader 'Employment for Peace programme', it was envisaged that this pilot office would become a model for ameliorating the capacities of the Ministry's other employment offices and replicating services as required in other fields where similar challenges were observed. The function of this pilot office was to: assist job seekers in searching for employment; providing information and referral services pertaining to self-employment and training opportunities; establishing a labour market information database with skills profiles for young job seekers, outlines of skill shortages and information on training institutions serving war affected young people. The ILO strived for rapid impact through partnerships with the National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration that was focused on assisting ex combatants by cultivating training quality and identifying sector outlets that encompassed the capacity to absorb apprentices.

For more information: ILO (2003). [*Guidelines for establishing emergency public employment services*](#).

employment and training opportunities provided by projects launched by international organisations, NGOs, other national and international actors, and private sector employers (see [Box 4](#)). Long-term sustainability of these services can be ensured only if the capacity of local government structures in the affected areas is strengthened.

- At the different stages of a peace-building process, employment services can be delivered through public, private and third-sector organisations. Coordination can be a major issue. In **Jordan**, for example, the labour code allows private employment agencies to operate upon authorisation by the Minister and according to established regulations. Furthermore, the Minister may authorise associations, syndicates, professional associations, universities, municipalities, chamber of industries and commerce or any public bodies to provide intermediation services to Jordanians for free. In response to the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan, there were around 26 service providers comprising international NGOs and UN agencies in mid-2017, not counting government, private and other local NGOs operating in the country. Services offered ranged from registration, job search assistance and placement to group counselling, referral to ALMPs and management and dissemination of labour market information to clients. In order to coordinate the efforts of different stakeholders, the ILO supported the Ministry of Labour to establish a Coordination Group for international organisations providing employment services. The Coordination Group is guided by the “Core Principles and Minimum Standards of Services” and would meet regularly to harmonise the delivery of their employment services. Furthermore, with the support of donors, the ILO developed a single online platform to provide Jordanians and Syrian refugees with online registration and matching services, career guidance and training, a mapping of services in the area, and labour market information, among others. The ILO and other international organisations also sought to coordinate efforts at the regional level to contribute to improved quality and coherence of the refugee crisis response in Syria+5 countries¹⁴ (ILO et al., 2017). The core principles and minimum standards of services adopted in Jordan were adapted from the regional Core Principles.

➔ *Territorial approaches to youth employment in fragile contexts*

- Recognising that crisis responses need to be more holistic, coordinated and adapted to the local context, the ILO encourages partnerships between private and public stakeholders to enable the joint design and implementation of common development strategies and the use of local resources and competitive advantages of a territory, with the objective of creating decent jobs including for young people. **Local Economic Development (LED)** and **Local Economic Recovery (LER)** are participatory processes that apply an area-based, bottom-up approach to integrate the economic, social, political and institutional dimensions of

¹⁴ Syria+: Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq.

development at the local level. They include listening to the community's needs, involving them in the institutional decision-making processes, creating linkages across policy areas and greater coordination between the different actors (ILO, 2004). These processes have been adapted to crisis situations¹⁵. Central to immediate job creation in post-crisis contexts, LED and LER strategies help build policy coherence between national and sub-national levels while paving the ground for building effective linkages between young women and men, local value chains and markets. In addition, the promotion of LED and LER for youth employment stimulates participation and social dialogue at the local level, connecting young people and their communities with locally available tools and resources, and supporting reconciliation.

- Combining LED with **Value Chain Development (VCD) approaches** is another way to boost employment creation, job quality improvement and peace-building outcomes in crisis settings, while strengthening competitiveness and integration of small enterprises into markets. For example, in **northern Lebanon**¹⁶ the ILO has implemented a local economic development programme targeting both host community and Syrian refugees, also boosting cooperatives through the development of value chains. The project motivated all market players in favour of the common cause of exporting agricultural products to the EU and, in the process, contributed to positive contact and the overcoming of divisions between separated communities.

➔ *Crosscutting components*

- Fragile and post-conflict environments are characterised by weakened institutional and governance structures, and depleted social capital where the loss of confidence and trust in formal authorities combines with the collapse of relationships and community values. In addition, the adverse impact of crises disproportionately affects the most marginalised and disadvantaged, and can prompt or exacerbate violations of the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (FPRW) such as discrimination, child labour, forced or compulsory labour, limitation of freedom of association and of the right to collective bargaining.
- Cognizant of the need to rebuild trust in institutions, support social cohesion and protect rights in order to provide sustainable responses to conflict, ILO's interventions aimed at

¹⁵ See: (i) ILO (2004). *Local economic development in post-crisis situations: Operational guide*, at: https://www.ilo.org/empent/Publications/WCMS_112267/lang--en/index.htm; and (ii) ILO (2010). *Local Economic Recovery in Post-Conflict*, at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/instructionalmaterial/wcms_141270.pdf (iii) Through the Programme for Local Economic Development through Enhanced Governance and Grassroots Empowerment (PLEDGE), the ILO endeavored to contribute to confidence and peace building efforts in conflict affected areas of Mindanao, Philippines. https://www.ilo.org/manila/projects/WCMS_220884/lang--en/index.htm

¹⁶ https://www.ilo.org/beirut/projects/WCMS_234666/lang--en/index.htm

creating employment and decent work opportunities for youth in fragile settings pay special attention to:

- i. **Institution building:** the knowledge and capacity¹⁷ of national and local institutions are developed to help them improve governance and take responsibility for the design and implementation of employment policy and programmes that contribute to peace and resilience;
 - ii. **Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work:** the respect, promotion and realisation of relevant International Labour Standards¹⁸ are advocated as a way to address grievances and tackle root causes of conflict;
 - iii. **Social dialogue:** active dialogue between governments, employers and workers is instrumental to ensure thorough identification of needs and locally appropriate solutions, increase local ownership and transparency, support consensus building and restore trust.
- In the aftermath of crisis, the focus is on restoring the capacity of national institutions and communities to recover, revitalising the economy and preventing setbacks. As the situation moves from relief to recovery, there is a process of transition increasingly led by national actors. As an example, in the wake of the 2006 crisis in **Timor-Leste**, the ILO provided embedded technical assistance within the national labour administration to increase the existing capacity of the government in the management of employment policy and programmes. The project embedded international staff directly within national institutions and worked through national institutions systems to respond to unaddressed emergency needs and support the establishment of credible and effective national leadership, an imperative for peace consolidation and state-building. The effectiveness and efficiency of the embedded approach were demonstrated by the sustainability of its results. Today the ILO in Timor-Leste continues to deliver Decent Work objectives through programmes and work in three priority area: youth employment promotion, rural economic development and labour market governance (ILO, 2016c).

IV. Enhancing youth employment outcomes in fragile situations: Ways forward

Young people between the ages of 15-24 constitute a significant proportion of the population in disaster and conflict affected states. Programming in these countries has often been challenging due to the transience of the human life cycle and the complexities associated with

¹⁷ Relevant training courses offered by the ILO's International Training Centre include:

(i) <https://www.itcilo.org/courses/promotion-youth-employment-fragile-settings-0> and (ii) the "Massive Open Online Course on ILO's Recommendation 205" <https://www.itcilo.org/courses/employment-and-decent-work-peace-and-resilience>

¹⁸ See: ILO (2017). *Guide to International Labour Standards and rights at work concerning young people*.

it, which are also grounded on the position of youth and adolescence relative to other stages of the human life cycle. Although young people can bring a positive impetus for socio-economic change in their respective communities, they are often excluded from decision-making processes in post crisis development and recovery efforts.

Adequately addressing the specific needs of young people is pivotal to stabilising crisis-affected societies. For instance, in the case of young ex-combatants, evidence has demonstrated that successful reintegration measures rely on both the generation of opportunities in the labour market and the improvement of the employability of youth formerly associated with armed forces and groups (UNDDR, 2016). Exclusion from decision-making processes, on the contrary, has shown to exacerbate young people's pre-existing vulnerabilities and animate their recourse to anti-social behaviours, feeding a downward spiral of poverty, frustration and violence. Promoting youth employment in fragile settings has therefore become paramount to both reduce vulnerability of young people and seize their positive transformational potential.

The table below represents an indicative, non-exhaustive list of elements for a **SWOT analysis of youth employment promotion programmes in conflict and disaster settings**.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Institutional knowledge. Lessons learnt from previous experiences	Lack of information on youth labour markets and other aspects for informed programme design
Flexibility to innovation	Meagre financial envelopes
Alignment with relevant global and regional initiatives on conflicts and disasters	Limited scope and scale of interventions. Short programme duration
Context-specific, targeted measures	Weak national capacity and ownership
Multidisciplinary approach. Team working	Insufficient coordination and follow up (M&E and impact assessment)
Networking. Liaisons with inter-agency initiatives	Poor exit strategies
Opportunities	Threats
Societies receptive to change	Lack of collective vision/focus
Social dialogue and reconciliation efforts	Dysfunctional public institutions
Local knowledge for viable solutions	Socio-political instability and high turnover in leadership
Community and youth engagement. Involvement of private sector	Resurgent violence
Multi-donor support and joint programming	Environmental degradation. Health epidemics.

Source: Authors

Lessons learned from ILO engagement in youth employment promotion in conflict and disaster settings include:

- **Understanding youth heterogeneity through context-specific analysis:** interventions should be formulated to address the specific heterogeneous needs of youth subgroups (e.g. young ex-combatants, young returnees and refugees, displaced youth, young women and young migrants) and data should be disaggregated based on individual characteristics (e.g. age, sex, educational level, socio-cultural background etc.). Specific attention should be directed towards understanding the “push” and “pull” factors related to decision-making processes at the individual level within a given social context. For example, it is necessary to consider the factors that may overcome youth reluctance to engage in certain income-generating activities due to negative perceptions or social stigma, and where possible provide support to curtail such negative associations. Similarly, particular emphasis should be placed on comprehending the multi-faceted dynamics of youth engagement in anti-social behaviours at the local level. In line with this, interventions should attempt to address both the structural and idiosyncratic elements that contribute to adverse behaviours through decent employment generation and improvements in the quality and availability of education and training opportunities, as well as through psychosocial support, conflict resolution training and social dialogue. Analyses of the dynamics of each particular crisis and the needs of the diverse subgroups are necessary to ensure programme relevance and flexibility during volatility.
- **Establishing constructive contact in four dimensions (youth-youth/youth-community/youth-business and youth-government connections):** the lack of exposure to alternate ways of thinking and values can fuel insularity. Creating spaces for contact, for example by connecting young ex-combatants with other youth who have not been engaged in armed conflict, can facilitate the overall integration of these youth into their societies at large. Programmes that simultaneously address the needs of young ex-combatants and other youth subgroups have been relatively more successful in breaching the segregation that hampers effective youth reintegration. Supporting youth cooperatives can be one vehicle to disseminate positive values such as responsibility, teamwork, accountability and democracy, together with essential business skills and training. Another issue exacerbating youth grievances is distrust in the government and institutions, and disillusionment with the private sector. Providing a platform for social dialogue allows youth to engage with governments and employers’ organisations at the community level. For example, strengthening apprenticeships and engaging with local councils and community groups can be another conduit to support social integration and cohesion.
- **Understanding labour market requirements:** market analysis and value-chain assessment should be applied to identify the relevant sectors and opportunities for

young people. While the consideration of youth interests is imperative when conducting value chain development interventions (e.g. unattractiveness of agricultural activities for some youth), it is equally important to formulate interventions that respond to the market (e.g. skills in demand, micro-enterprises and self-employment), as this can facilitate youth transition into growth sectors and burgeoning industries.

- **Promoting local ownership (youth, community, national):** one dimension of project effectiveness is including young people and their communities in project design and implementation. This enhances peer-to-peer and community relationships, and ensures ownership and empowerment. All other stakeholders, such as employers and workers' organisations, unions, NGOs and donors should also be involved in project design and implementation to facilitate youth transition into the world of work. It is particularly important to involve the private sector in order to ensure that the training provided meets market demands. In this respect, incentives can be provided to stimulate private sector investment in young people.
- **Ensuring outreach and the inclusion of all youth:** several interventions targeting youth in conflict and disaster settings have focused on involving only young people who are easier to reach, such as those engaged in education programmes or their communities. This leaves behind hard-to-reach youth, who are equally, if not more vulnerable, during crises. Innovative approaches, including technology-based solutions, should be explored to reach youth who have been detached from community systems and interventions due to geographic or other types of isolation.
- **Establishing clearly defined theories of change:** the objectives of job creation interventions in fragile settings should be identified and clarified through theories of change that link positive labour market outcomes for youth to peace and resilience. Therefore, more resources should be allocated to comprehending the dynamics and potential mechanisms through which these interventions can bring change.
- **Boosting policy coherence and multi-sectoral interventions:** Coherence and complementarity with wider reforms facilitate the delivery of sustained and effective results to promote national development and integrate accountability and efficiency mechanisms in the response to conflicts and natural disasters. In this respect, mechanisms that link short-term interventions with long-term employment generation can be an avenue for more sustained results. ILO experience suggests to place more concentration on supporting the policy environment and enhancing coordination in a way that youth empowerment is addressed as a cross cutting issue and throughout the different phases from emergency to development.
- **Enhancing mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation:** rigorous monitoring of interventions is recommended to ensure continued relevance in volatile political and socioeconomic climates. More specifically, emphasis should be placed on comparing

the outcomes and perception changes among programme participants versus non-participants to understand the effects of employment programmes on both employment and peace and resilience. ■

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YEP Technical Notes

Drawing on international literature and relevant country cases, the YEP Technical Notes are meant to support decision-makers and practitioners who endeavour to ensure decent job opportunities and a better working future for young people.

These notes consider key issues pertaining to a given subject area, and offer orientations, technical insights and examples of interventions that work effectively in improving youth transitions into labour markets as well as their employment conditions.



The ILO's Youth Employment Programme (YEP) supports national capacity to design, implement and evaluate context-specific youth employment policies and programmes. It operates through a network of ILO specialists and external partners, towards meeting national and global development goals.

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