

WORKSHOP on LABOUR MARKET CONTINGENCY PLAN for SAINT LUCIA

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BACKGROUND

Notwithstanding severe structural damage and economic burdens, natural and man-made disasters have a devastating impact on the labour force and social sector. Disaster preparedness must happen at all levels and requires that national and local institutions of work and individuals have the capacities and knowledge to minimize impact.

Preparedness is also an essential component of recovery because it anticipates the impact and identifies approaches to mitigation. While a number of long standing response mechanisms do exist, the focus of attention is often restricted to life saving matters. The lack of contingency and continuity planning in livelihood and employment areas leaves important gaps in overall recovery endeavours. The ability to recover and cope with transitions is crucially enabled by an engaged and incentivized private sector work in alliance with the public sector to create essential knowledge and skills which promote the required continuum of life-long learning, technology, investment and financing. The promotion of decent work - through strong labour market institutions and social partners- is a key instrument for building resilient societies.

Among the major lessons learned from 2017 natural disasters in the Eastern Caribbean, is that the ILO constituents did not have the necessary tools to mainstream Decent Work in the national recovery process, nor to run, or actively participate in Post Disaster Needs Assessments (PDNAs). The opportunity to implement an employment and livelihood-centred recovery response in the aftermath of the widespread devastation caused by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria was largely missed. The interventions from the ILO after the crisis demonstrated that there is an urgent need to support capacity strengthening and institutional reform if resilience goals are to be fully realized.

Resilience is defined by the ILO Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No. 205) - as “the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions through risk management”. There is no doubt that for the Caribbean, resilience is a core issue with vulnerability increasingly at the forefront of the regional political agenda.

To respond to the needs and challenges outlined above, the ILO Caribbean Office launched the Caribbean Resilience Project (CRP) targeting Guyana, Saint Lucia and Dominica, with the goal of strengthening the capacities of Caribbean countries to become more resilient. The project is guided by the strategy adopted by the ILO to implement Recommendation No. 205. Additionally, it seeks to ensure that the principles embedded in the ILO “Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all” are fully adopted and implemented at national level.

One of the outputs of the project is the development of Labour Market Contingency Plans that seek to map the potential impact of disasters on the labour market, workers, enterprises, and labour market institutions. These plans simulate the impact of natural disasters on the labour market and identify opportunities and capacities for economic recovery at company, household, community and local economy level. These type of contingency plans do not exist in the Caribbean and this will be the first time that the ILO attempts to develop them. It is expected that the template used in Saint Lucia could be used in other countries of the Caribbean.



OBJECTIVES AND MODALITIES OF THE WORKSHOP

The Labour Market Contingency plans are planning tools to build resilience of disaster-affected and vulnerable populations through a both job-rich and inclusive recovery process anchored on decent work. Additionally, they provide a road map to address all phases of Disaster Risk Reduction providing the labour market with recovery initiatives aligned with national plans and priorities. Contingency plans also provide guidance to donors to support preparedness and recovery by identifying risks, needs and actions to be carried out before and after the disasters.

The application of ILO tools will inform the Contingency Plans that would include activities to:

- create jobs and reduce unemployment, underemployment and income poverty;
- support infrastructure rehabilitation and maintenance needs including repair of housing and transport facilities, community flood preventive works, soil conservation and watershed management;
- enhance skills development to address the reconstruction demand for skilled workers;
- promote green jobs through green works as a core element of sustainable development and to respond to the global challenges of environmental protection, economic development and social inclusion;
- support the enabling environment to make business resilient and allow them to restart businesses and improve business practices and operations;
- improve working conditions and promote gender equality, worker's rights, social dialogue, and social protection; and
- support technical and institutional strengthening to develop a resilient labour market.

The elaboration of the Labour Market Contingency Plan will be conducted in two phases:

1. Inception phase: this phase will focus on sensitization and advocacy to key stakeholders about the importance of having contingency plans. Additionally, it will map risks and needs of stakeholders and consolidate and seek agreements on the template and key contents of the Contingency Plan.
2. Completion phase: this phase will build a fully-fledged Contingency Plan for validation by stakeholders. The plan will build on individual stakeholders' operational policies and practices as well as contingency responses that may affect the labour market. It will also include the reinforcement of capacity of stakeholders to conduct PDNAs, particularly on the component on Employment, Livelihoods and Social Protection Sector (ELSP).

The Workshop on Labour Market Contingency Plan for Saint Lucia is organized by the Labour Department of Saint Lucia in cooperation with the Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean. The workshop will address the inception phase described above and will have the following objectives:

1. Familiarize with Disaster Risk Reduction initiatives in Saint Lucia
2. Present the results of the desk review on contingency plans in the Caribbean
3. Map key risks that would affect the labour market in case of disasters
4. Develop the template for the Labour Market Contingency Plan for Saint Lucia, jointly with stakeholders
5. Identify key contents of the Contingency Plan

The workshop will have a mix of presentations and group work. Presentations will inform participants about existing policies, practices and needs. They will be done by representatives of the Government of Saint Lucia, workers', employers' and ILO. Group work will focus on gathering information from different stakeholders to draft the Contingency Plan.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Invited institutions are:

1. (4) Ministry of Infrastructure, Ports, Energy and Labour (Department of Labour)
2. (2) National Emergency Management Organisation
3. (1) Ministry of Finance, Economic Growth, Job Creation, External Affairs and the Public Service
4. (1) Ministry of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations and Sustainable Development
5. (1) Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Natural Resources and Co-operatives
6. (1) Ministry of Commerce, Industry, Investment, Enterprise Development and Consumer Affairs
7. (1) Ministry of Tourism, Information and Broadcasting, Culture and Creative Industries
8. (1) National Insurance Corporation
9. (1) Central Statistical Office
10. (6) Employers representatives
 - a. Saint Lucia Employers Federation
 - b. Saint Lucia Manufacturer Association
 - c. Saint Lucia Chamber of Commerce
11. (6) Workers' representatives
 - a. Saint Lucia Trade Union Federation
 - b. National Workers Union
12. (4) NGOs (e.g. women, youth, Red Cross, climate change, etc.)