

ILO-UNHCR Technical Cooperation Partnership (TCP) in Liberia

Decent Work as a Durable Solution



International
Labour
Organization

The ILO and Crisis Response

Encouraged by positive involvement in crisis response throughout the 1990s, the ILO formed the In-Focus Programme on Crisis Response and Reconstruction in 1999 to coordinate and marshal the immediate ILO response in areas of armed conflict, natural disasters and economic downturns. Renamed ILO/CRISIS in 2005, the programme has engaged a three-pillared approach in 58 countries, employing direct country interventions, strategic partnerships and capacity building tools and workshops to impress *Decent Work* principles at the outset of reconstruction efforts.

The ILO-UNHCR TCP Partnership

Bolstered by over forty years of partnership experience, ILO and UNHCR initiated the *Technical Cooperation Partnership for the Socio-Economic Reintegration of Refugees, Returnees, and IDPs* in 2004. In its first phase (2004-2008), the partnership set the framework for the rapid deployment of ILO livelihood experts to UNHCR country operations.

Deployments in 17 countries have yielded promising results. Inter-agency coordination at headquarter level between ILO/CRISIS and UNHCR's PBLPS division (now OSTs) has remained strong. Collaboration between the deployed ILO expert and UNHCR field staff has been smooth overall. ILO tools regularly inform UNHCR reintegration efforts in the field, while experts have emphasized community-based initiatives and supported UNHCR programmes in:

- ✓ microfinance
- ✓ micro- and small-business development
- ✓ local economic development
- ✓ cooperative development
- ✓ skills and vocational training
- ✓ employment services
- ✓ women's socio-economic empowerment
- ✓ employment-intensive reconstruction

Within the UN's *Deliver as One* strategy, the ILO-UNHCR TCP has helped pioneer concrete programmatic synergies between a humanitarian and development agency. As the co-chair of the twelve-member Working Group *UN-Wide Policy Note on Employment in Post-Conflict*, ILO ensured that UNHCR's valuable humanitarian perspective remained relevant.

The ILO and the Government of Liberia

Liberian President HE Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf addressed the International Labour Conference in 2006, calling for robust ILO assistance in revitalizing employment in her country. Ensuing technical round tables and Liberian stakeholder mini-workshops

identified quick and massive job creation in Liberia as a critical priority to ensure human security, social progress and economic growth.

Within six weeks of the President's call, the Government of Liberia, with ILO technical assistance, formulated the Liberia Employment Emergency Programme and Liberia Employment Action Programme (LEEP/LEAP), a decent work employment strategy administered by the Liberian government that encourages both

- ✓ Short-term employment (through labour-intensive road reconstruction efforts and the private sector development of waste management in Monrovia), and
- ✓ Institution-building (with the establishment of a LEEP secretariat, development of a knowledge sharing and communication strategy, and stakeholder workshops)

In addition to LEEP/LEAP, ILO has completed several other projects including:

- ✓ Finalization of joint studies with FAO, UNDP and UNHCR that focus on agriculture and on youth employment;
- ✓ The elaboration and launch of joint projects with UNDP (to promote ex-combatant reintegration and decentralization), UNV (to provide volunteer services to support local economic development in Liberia), and with UNIFEM (to run a common project on gender and employment);
- ✓ Development of *Decent Work* strategies and goals with the Ministry of Labour
- ✓ Provision of technical advice to the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration

The ILO and UNHCR in Liberia: Return, Employment, Peacebuilding

An ILO livelihood consultant was deployed by the TCP to Liberia in 2007 to assess the feasibility of creating cooperatives to provide youth employment, one of Liberia's most pressing peacebuilding needs. Working in close collaboration with the UNHCR field office, the consultant recommended the establishment of manufacturing and mining cooperatives to provide youth employment.

On the basis of the consultant's assessment and recommendations, the ILO Chief Technical Advisor, a part of the UN Country Team, proposed an intervention that included the ILO Youth Entrepreneurship Package (YEP) to "Create Skills, Productive Assets and Access to Agriculture Markets for Women and Youth."

The resulting project proposal has received preliminary approval for a USD 1 million disbursement from the UN Liberia Peacebuilding Fund. Crafted jointly by ILO and UNHCR and submitted by ILO, the program plans for:

Road rehabilitation: labour-intensive infrastructure project that will generate 90,000 person-days of employment, rehabilitating 36 km of roads that will benefit 23 communities with a combined population exceeding 57,000 persons

Agricultural production, life skills training, cooperative management training: creating 15 non-farm cooperatives in Lofa province and a TBD number of cooperatives restored in Nimba province, impacting at least 29,750 direct cooperative members and improving food security, life skills and income for over 200,000 people

Business and life-skills training: training at least 100 women and 1,000 youth

Micro-finance services: providing microloans to at least 2,500 women

Agro-processing skills, equipment, and advise: provided to 3,000 youth

The program has attracted the wide involvement of the Government of Liberia, various UN agencies, INGOs and local NGOs. Due to its strong field presence, UNHCR will provide monitoring, guidance, and logistics support for the implementation of the project. ILO will recruit two Engineers and a short-term consultant to support employment services, entrepreneurship, cooperative management training and skills development. Additional partners of note are FAO (technical guidance on agricultural inputs) and the Danish Refugee Council and local NGOs, who will be implementing partners in Nimba province.