

# **Livelihood And Employment Creation**

**Public employment services**

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Public employment services

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# PREFACE

## Proposal of short Operational Guidelines<sup>1</sup>

*This collection of short guides describes a number of activities (based upon labour, enterprise and business development, training and local area development) that will contribute to the promotion of both social and economic recovery and livelihoods. Each activity is explained, and 'why', 'how', and 'when' (or when not) to implement them is outlined in a brief guide.*

### A. Why these guides

These guides provide a practical introduction to employment and business-related interventions. They are written for humanitarian and development field workers working on the promotion of self-reliance and livelihoods of displaced populations and other conflict-affected communities. They highlight opportunities and limitations of different relevant ILO approaches and methodologies for socio-economic empowerment through employment-oriented strategies. They should help field staff decide the suitability and feasibility of adopting these approaches in their particular operations; and will also help identify any need for specific ILO expertise to support relevant UNHCR operations.

These guides will not substitute technical expertise in the field; rather they are programming and decision-making guidelines that will help programme and technical staff oversee the design and implementation of relevant activities. Further technical training or partnerships should be developed as appropriate.

The subjects can be divided into three major categories:

'Cash for work', 'Food for work', 'Labour-based infrastructure reconstruction' and 'Community contracting' belong to the first. These three areas concentrate on the creation of temporary jobs that can inject cash into a community rapidly. These jobs are not meant to provide sustainable livelihoods, but are designed to revive the local economy, provide a boost to household economies, either in refugee hosting areas or in the reconstruction phase of a post-conflict situation, in order to create the means for further development.

<sup>1</sup> These short guides were elaborated by Maria Lazarte G. to be included in the UNHCR Self reliance Manual and have been derived from consultations with ILO technical departments and based on their relevant publications.

The second category includes micro- and small-enterprise development and its subsections: 'Microfinance', 'Business development services', 'Start and improve your business' and 'Women entrepreneurship development'. This group concentrates on building sustainable self-employment, and on micro- and small-enterprise support and development.

The last group contains general strategies that can be used in combination with strategies above in order to promote individual and communal economic development. These include 'Emergency public employment services', 'Skills-training', and 'Local economic development'.

## **A. Who should use them**

These guides are written for middle managers, national and international field experts and associated partners.

## **B. How should they be used**

The guides comprise of a combination of briefings and a compilation of major relevant ILO tools on each subject.

The guides provide decision-oriented information on each area, and expansive methodological guidelines as well as a reference to an additional online bibliography and contact information for further resources and technical help.

The guides are divided into the following sections:

A brief summary of each strategy ('what is').

Its main advantages ('why implement')

Information on when to implement each strategy ('when to')

Warnings ('when not to implement').

Problems and challenges to consider before and during implementation ('problems/challenges').

Basic steps or different forms of each particular strategy, and some recommendations to consider during the implementation of each strategy ('how to').

## **C. Contents**

There are twelve guides

Building a basis for employment and enterprise development

1. Vocational and skills-training
2. Local economic development
3. Public employment services

Short-term employment options

4. Cash-for-work
5. Food-for-work
6. Labour-based infrastructure projects
7. Community contracting

Business development options

8. Micro and small enterprise promotion
9. Microfinance
10. Business development services
11. Start and improve your own business
12. Women entrepreneurship development

# Public employment services

## A. What are Emergency Public Employment Services (EPES)

EPES are crucial in building links between job seekers and employment opportunities in areas where crises have had a severe impact on the economy, and employment promotion is essential for recovery.

The roles of EPES are: to register job seekers and vacancies; offer information and counseling on job searching and self-employment; match job seekers to vacancies; address the needs of particular groups such as refugees, women, youth, ethnic and minority groups (ensuring equal access to employment opportunities); refer interested persons to training programmes, social services and other relevant employment support initiatives and institutions; and conduct rapid assessments of local labour markets. The role of EPES can range from acting as a support for specific initiatives targeting particular groups, to providing general employment aid to all affected parties in a crisis.

Initially, EPES should focus on pursuing short- and medium- term interventions, prioritising specific target groups with the aid and support of international organisations, NGOs and other national and international actors involved in the humanitarian and reconstruction processes. EPES can start immediately after a crisis, with relatively simple service centres (perhaps consisting of a tent and a small number of staff) matching job seekers to vacancies such as identifying individuals to help set up refugee camps or other related jobs. This can evolve over time, expanding the variety of services offered (e.g. skills-training). Some could eventually become permanent.

## B. Why establish EPES

In crisis contexts employment problems arise when large numbers lose their jobs and means of livelihood. In particular, groups with special needs (including refugees, demobilized soldiers and widows) might need to find a job for the first time. In addition, following a crisis, work opportunities are usually drastically reduced, especially within the formal sector.

Post-crisis interventions can produce temporary employment through infrastructure reconstruction, relief-aid distribution, establishment of temporary shelters, socio-economic reintegration and self-employment possibilities.

### **C. When to establish EPES**

EPES should be established in the aftermath of armed conflicts, displacement and other crises (including natural disasters, difficult political and social transitions, etc.). They should be set up in areas where alterations in the supply and demand of labour are substantial, frequent and take unpredictable directions, and where employment requirements are consequently urgent.

### **D. When not to establish EPES**

They should not be attempted if there are other EPES offices in the area. They should not be duplicated, but adapted to the needs of the emergency context.

### **E. Problems/challenges**

Coordination between employment agencies is crucial to avoid duplication and address targets efficiently. It is also important to coordinate between different employment promotion programs to increase their efficacy (by linking skills-training, SIYB, labour-based works and other employment related programmes).

Flexibility is vital in emergency contexts, to ensure that EPES can be adapted easily to emerging needs (e.g. bringing EPES to groups with special needs in remote areas).

### **F. Partners/Targets**

#### *Targets*

EPES are focused on unemployed individuals in conflict-affected areas or in displacement situations. In this context they can also be used to facilitate access to employment to groups with special needs (women, youth, refugees, ex-combatants, etc.)

#### *Partners*

ILO and other relevant UN agencies, national authorities, NGOs, crisis-response government agencies, private employment service agencies, employers' and workers' organisations, local authorities and donors.

## **G. How to establish EPES (Steps/Stages)**

EPES should form part of the wider emergency response programme in the area. In order to determine what type of EPES to establish it is necessary to have a good understanding of the context. In particular, it is important that EPES address the specific needs of a displacement or post-crisis situation, focusing on vulnerable target groups and affected areas and services. It is therefore necessary to assess the facilities already in existence and their adequacy for crisis response and reconstruction. In this way it will be possible to target action successfully, and coordinate to avoid duplication and address the most salient gaps. Although EPES can collaborate with private employment service agencies for this purpose, they cannot be substituted by them as long as the emergency situation and/or emergency reconstruction process lasts.

EPES should be directly relevant to the displacement and post-crisis context. They should be viable, visible, and enjoy the support of other key actors in the area, including the UN and other international agencies. EPES should be regarded as the focal point for recruitment, orientation, and other related activities including skills-training, decent work conditions and wage setting.

Setting up a pilot EPES with limited scope and services can prove extremely useful to produce rapid results and therefore gain trust and experience. However, it is important that these pilot EPES have reasonable goals and adequate financial resources to ensure that they do not lose credibility by creating unrealistic expectations.

It is important therefore, through careful planning and realistic expectations, to ensure that the objectives of EPES are attainable, that sufficient resources are available to guarantee their sustainability, and that donors and national authorities remain committed to the project. A “memorandum of understanding” can set up arrangements for the actors involved, including actions to be taken, distribution of responsibilities, time frame, projected results and long-term sustainability.

To establish a successful EPES it is also vital to begin by sensitizing the authorities and national and international crisis response actors to the role and importance of EPES in their work. In this way it will be possible to obtain their support and participation in EPES activities, as well as their commitment to the longer term

continuity and development of EPES. EPES should be owned by a national counterpart (usually the ministry of labour). Therefore, it is important that they be regarded as credible, reliable, result-producing services that provide valuable support to job seekers and employers.

EPES should be flexible to address rapidly emerging necessities. These might take the form of informal services, such as creating temporary mobile registration centres, visiting job seekers in camp settlements or return areas and other removed locations or employers in large project sites, and offering special information sessions for vulnerable groups. Staff should be trained to regard job-seekers and employers as clients, and treat them with respect.


Finally, EPES should market their services in pragmatic and creative ways, through the media, special events, publicity materials, agencies and other mediums (such as local churches or mosques) appropriate to the specific context.

### *Steps*

1. **Needs assessment.** Conduct a needs-assessment with other national and international actors involved in responding to the crisis. Determine whether public employment services already exist, and if they can be adapted to fit the needs of the emergency context
2. **Collaboration.** Coordinate with other relevant agencies and local community networks. Establish consultation and cooperation with local workers' and employers' organisations.
3. **Targeting.** Ensure that assistance can be targeted to groups with special needs, such as women, youth and persons with disabilities, and for all community groups (refugees, returnees, IDPs, locals).
4. **National authorities.** Ascertain the commitment of the relevant national authorities.
5. **Location.** Identify the location of the EPES premises and prepare them.
6. **Staffing.** Recruit EPES officials and train them.

7. **Setting up the systems.** Concentrate on job-making at the outset. Set up job seeker registration arrangements. Contact employers and contractors engaged in major projects, to assist them with programme design (to promote labour-intensive methods) and recruitment requirements. Collect basic labour market information concerning the area including all community groups, to identify skills shortages, areas of growth, training requirements, etc.
8. **Providing training.** Develop links with training institutions to make these services available to job seekers, including on-the-job options.
9. **Provide the services.** Establish advice and information services to assist job seekers and employers on employment alternatives, small-business development and sustainable livelihood options.

For practical information on how to set up an EPES see:

 *Guidelines for Establishing Emergency Public Employment Services.* InFocus Programme on Crisis Response and Reconstruction. International Labour Organisation, Recovery and Reconstruction Department. Geneva: ILO, 2003.

Links:

[www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)  
[www.ilo.org/crisis](http://www.ilo.org/crisis)  
[www.ilo.org/seed](http://www.ilo.org/seed)

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