

Livelihood And Employment Creation

Vocational and skills-training

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First published 2005

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ILO

International Labour Organization, 2005

“ILO Guides on Livelihood and Employment Creation ILO's recommended management and policy options for employment friendly reconstruction in Sri Lanka”

Vocational and skills training

ISBN 92-2-117348-8

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This document is an output of the ILO's InFocus Programme on crisis Response and Reconstruction, designed and printed by ILO office in Sri Lanka

PREFACE

Proposal of short Operational Guidelines¹

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.

¹ 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

Vocational and skills-training

A. What is skills-training

Vocational and skills-training involves helping individuals develop technical and entrepreneurial skills in order to increase their employability. Skills-training does not create employment but assists individuals to develop skills necessary to earn a livelihood, enhance and sustain their productivity, and improve their flexibility in the labour-market. Skills-training will also develop social skills.

B. Why implement skills-training

There are a number of reasons:

Crises can have a destructive effect on a national socio-economic framework, dramatically reducing job opportunities and damaging the institutions usually involved in providing the necessary skills for generating a livelihood. Skills-training is therefore crucial in reconstruction and economic rehabilitation.

Displacement involves adjusting to new social economic environments. It can provide an opportunity for learning new skills and contributing to the economic development of the hosting districts.

If skills-training is carefully targeted to address market opportunities, potential entrepreneurs and other individuals entering the job market have increased chances of success.

Youth affected by conflict have often have an interrupted education. Skills-training allows them to learn skills that, if adjusted (or responding) to market demand, can help youth to: generate income; avoid idleness and frustration; and avoid the risk of their enrolment in military or criminal activities.

Women's roles are also affected by conflict. Conflict often produces a large number of women heads of household. Such women may engage in paid or self-employment for the first time, but lack the relevant skills.

Skills-training also has clear development benefits if adapted current market needs broadening the range of skills available and increasing job possibilities. It is also likely to make these services and skills available to the most vulnerable and poorest groups.

C. When to implement skills-training

These are the key opportunities:

When interest in raising employability and generating job opportunities (in order to diversify the applicant pool with a variety of targeted skills).

When the market requires upgraded or new skills, or where existing skills-training mechanisms are no longer working e.g. after a crisis involving loss of human resources and a loss of entrepreneurial and related skills.

Training should start as early as possible after an emergency, whether it is a displacement or (re)integration situation. The skills learnt should be applicable both in asylum and return situations.

When it can be combined with Income Generating Activities (IGAs), as it will substantially increase the success and impact of both skills-training and IGAs.

When it can be linked with other projects to support employment and labour absorption capacity (e.g. microfinance, business development services, labour-based works).

D. When not to implement skills-training

Best not undertaken:

When skills-training activities are not adapted to the local cultural context. If activities such as self-employment, micro-enterprise or cooperatives are encouraged in an area where there is no previous tradition and/or similar organisations or groups, the initiative may not be successful.

When the number of people trained in a certain skills exceeds the existing or likely market opportunity/capacity. Avoid saturating the market with a large number of individuals trained in any one specific craft.

E. Problems/Challenges

In the context of crisis:

Training may create high expectations, disillusionment and aggravate relations between trainees/communities and trainers/agencies if finding a job, after completion of training, remains difficult. This is particularly important in crisis affected areas where jobs are scarce.

Limited demand, due to poverty, conflict and low purchasing power, may force trainees to seek other sources of income. Correlating training to market demand is crucial.

Important labour market processes and institutions (including information and services, as well as business support and coordination) are often ineffective or damaged in conflict-affected environments.

Poor diversification of skills will saturate the market and will have a damaging effect on craftsmen already making a living from those skills. Mobile and creative training are some possible solutions (e.g. introducing new skills, self-employment options, cooperatives, etc).

In the case of refugees there might be legal difficulties including the need for work permits, payment of taxes, and restrictions on freedom of movement to access markets and employment.

Skills need to be put into practice immediately. The longer the time-lapse between gaining skills and putting them into practice, the greater the risk they will be lost or become obsolete. (Ideally skills of vocational training should be put into practice within 3 to 6 months).

Deep-seated ideas on 'traditional roles' can limit women's access to a variety of skills. Training women in only 'traditional tasks' (e.g. knitting) will further reinforce these beliefs.

Rapid implementation may not be possible. Training can be expensive. In rural areas it may be difficult to access raw materials and resources, and the number of people requiring training might be too large posing problems if resources are limited and few can benefit from training. This can lead to resentment and exclusion at a time when cooperation and social cohesion are most needed in an unstable environment.

The target beneficiaries may vary. Some may have only recently left school (or have only school experience), others may have previous work experience. Some may have other responsibilities, or suffer from trauma, mobility problems, etc., and the training may have to be adapted for content and delivery (see different delivery strategies in 'how to').

Access to training, particularly for the most vulnerable, might be difficult especially reflecting any minimum education requirement. Other problems may include: the timing of the training (it may take place during normal working hours), the location of facilities (they might be too far away), or the duration of the training (it may last too long and take up too much time). Flexibility is essential when designing a training strategy.

The capacity and/or expertise of NGOs, local institutions and partners in the field are not always adequate. Trainers can be hard to find, be unmotivated or unsuitable, and may not possess adequate expertise and/or capacity to assist trainees.

Training can be agency- rather than community-driven. Communities might have a limited capacity to manage the entire process and final result of the programme.

F. Partners/Targets

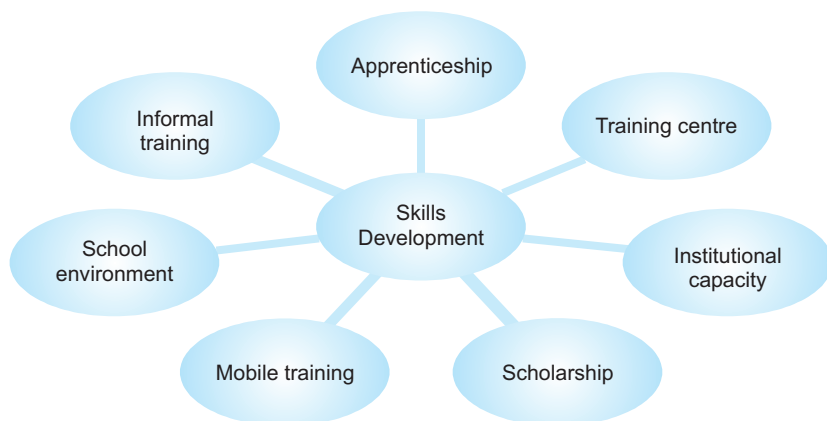
Targets

A wide range of individuals may require skills-training - from the unemployed to those seeking a change or improvement to their livelihood. Pay particular attention to women, youth, ex-combatants and other groups with special needs.

Partners

ILO, UN agencies, NGOs, donors, public and private national training institutions, traditional and community structures and authorities, employers and worker's organisations, and the private sector (e.g. for apprenticeship).

G. How to implement skills-training



Informal training

The most common and practical form of training, linked directly to daily life needs (e.g. adult literacy, food preparation, agriculture techniques, basic health, peace education, on the job training, workshops, sensitisation, mobilisation). Care must be taken to adapt audio visual and communication aids for illiterate audiences.

Skills development in school

Delivery of practical and life-skills-training to children in school, through intra/extra curricular activities.

Vocational training

Training, usually at training centres, in activities with recognised national standards (e.g. in teaching, agriculture, nursing, electrics and mechanics).

Formal training centre

This strategy offers formal education but it has often proved inefficient and expensive. It can create dependency on the project agency. Should be done only if the alternative is constructing parallel training centres.

Apprenticeships

Appropriate in communities where there are skilled people producing goods and services. Craftsmen are then given benefits in cash or kind in return for training apprentices. Apprenticeships maximise work experience and take training to the people.

Combination of apprenticeships and training centres

Trainees benefit from work experience during or at the end of their training.

Mobile training centres

Instructors move to teach trainees in their own communities. These are easier for trainees to access, particularly marginalised or disadvantaged people. The centres rely on facilities such as participant's homes, classroom blocks, and places of worship.

Scholarships

Scholarships can be used for vocational training colleges or universities (long-term). The skills offered should be selected according to community needs. The programme should be small as it is often expensive and its impact is not immediate.

Institutional capacity building

Provide capacity building (e.g. infrastructure and equipment) to national vocational training institutions or secondary schools, also offering practical skills

H. Considerations

Identify skills to be imparted according to local needs (e.g. agriculture in rural areas), existing community resources and capacities (of locals and displaced populations) and market demand. Introduce new skills but ensure that these can be marketed successfully (e.g. shoe-shining in urban areas). In the case of refugees consider reinforcing or rehabilitating former skills (i.e. the occupation of individuals prior to becoming refugees). Multiple skills can improve employability (e.g. literacy, management, computer skills, accounting). Give communities a voice in the decision. Community management will enhance sustainability.

Training should also be a means for developing social integration and social cohesion-through the promotion of skills on reconciliation, peace, crisis prevention and health issues.

Training should have a gender 'lens'. This is particularly important after a crisis in order to recognize how gender roles have changed (e.g. with more female heads of households) and strategically target and include women. For instance, develop training packages that allow for other household responsibilities (i.e. preparing food, fetching water in the morning, caring for children) with flexible timetables, etc. Youth and other groups with special needs should be considered in a similar way.

However, it is necessary to establish a balance between inclusiveness and targeting of special groups in order to ensure social harmony. Inclusiveness is particularly important in areas where the population at large is extremely poor, and when the target group is perceived negatively (e.g. ex-combatants). Mixed groups can promote social integration, though a degree of targeting can be necessary to ensure that groups with special needs benefit from these opportunities.

Partnerships and coordination helps avoid duplication, while permitting programmes to complement each other - maximising efficiency, sharing of responsibilities, increasing cost-effectiveness, and paving the way for sustainability and local ownership.

Finally, link trainees to the market to help them on their path to self-reliance (e.g. by introducing them to microfinance programmes).

Monitoring and evaluation will help you profit from lessons learnt.

For a community based training approach see:

For a community based training approach see:



Skills development, skills-training, vocational training for self-reliance,
Houtart, M. UNHCR BO Kampala.



*Community-based training for employment and income generation: a guide for
decision-makers*, Haan HC. International Labour Office. Training
Department (now please refer to IFP/SKILLS). Geneva: ILO, 1994.

Links:

www.ilo.org

www.ilo.org/skills

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