

**Upskilling out of the Downturn: Global Dialogue
Forum on Strategies for Sectoral Training and
Employment Security**Geneva
29–30 March 2010

Consensus-based recommendations

Introduction

- 1.** Government, Employer and Worker representatives attended the Global Dialogue Forum on Strategies for Sectoral Training and Employment Security, held at the ILO, Geneva, on 29–30 March 2010. The Forum examined strategies to address current and future skills needs across different sectors to support post-crisis employment growth and security and business productivity and sustainability.
- 2.** The Forum exchanged a wide range of views and experiences to identify key challenges, define strategies and document good experience for strong, sustainable and balanced growth. Interventions by participants considered concrete examples of sectoral skills development and training approaches, and addressed priority issues and challenges.
- 3.** The Forum recalled the Human Resources Development Recommendation, 2004 (No. 195), the conclusions of the Committee on Skills at the 97th Session of the International Labour Conference, the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization and the Global Jobs Pact, and confirmed the importance and relevance of these instruments.

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4. The Forum acknowledged the forthcoming G20 Ministerial Meeting in Washington, DC, and that the ILO had been called upon to prepare a training strategy for consideration by the G20 Summit Meeting.

Points of consensus

5. The impact of the global economic crisis on employment has affected countries and sectors differently and posed unprecedented challenges to governments, employers and workers. In this context, the Forum underscores the need for a sustained surge for more and better training.
6. The Forum recommends strengthening sectoral approaches to training.
7. A sectoral approach must be based on close collaboration between the social partners at national and local levels.
8. Bipartite or tripartite sectoral councils, including training providers, are well positioned to ensure better matching between demand for skills in sectors and training provision, anticipate future labour market and skills needs, and assess the quality and relevance of training programmes. They can also improve delivery of training, including for small and medium-sized enterprises because they can be more implicitly involved in the consultation process.
9. Sectoral skills strategies developed through social dialogue recognize each stakeholder's roles, rights and responsibilities. These skills strategies are demand driven, respond to changing conditions and emerging issues such as technology, trade, demographic trends and the environment. National sectoral skills development and training strategies are effective in taking a lifelong learning approach to meeting the skills needs of different sectors.

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- 10.** To be effective, sectoral approaches to skills development should be part of long-term national growth strategies, in order to build coherence between skills development and labour market policies, as well as those for technological innovation, public services delivery, trade and investment. Cross-sectoral approaches should be encouraged in order to provide core transversal competencies needed in all sectors.
 - 11.** The Forum emphasized that basic education is a primary responsibility of government. Quality education for all is a prerequisite to ability to learn and lifelong learning.
 - 12.** Combining classroom with work experience through apprenticeships and other traineeships eases labour market entry for young people. Care must be taken to ensure smooth transitions to regular employment.
 - 13.** Filling skills shortages and avoiding skills mismatch is dependent on sound labour market information and analysis on both demand and supply. Governments should work with sectoral social partners and other labour market stakeholders in order to identify skills gaps and shortages; improved quantitative and qualitative analysis at the sectoral level contributes to more effective skills matching. The Forum recognized the importance of employment services to provide career guidance and vocational counselling for new labour market entrants. The Forum also recommends study and career guidance in secondary education.
 - 14.** Skills programmes need to be inclusive and accessible to disadvantaged groups, such as the unemployed, low-skilled workers, those affected by HIV/AIDS, women, youth, migrant workers, those in the informal economy, and those in precarious employment. Migrants face many challenges in having their skills recognized in receiving countries and many sending countries face a brain drain of the highly skilled. Bilateral and multilateral arrangements to support migration and agreements recognizing skills of migrants should be considered.

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- 15.** National sectoral skills development and training systems, including their management structures, may not be transferred to other countries, but there should be basic concepts that can be provided in a global strategy. Each system must accommodate national, regional and local needs. However, sectoral approaches have been applied to various economic and social conditions and to different geographical requirements. Good practice from other countries and sectors should be considered and adapted in designing new or refining existing sectoral systems. Adequate investment in training by employers, workers and their organizations and governments is necessary, including through effective public–private partnerships.
- 16.** There was broad consensus among the participants that developing countries face an array of challenges that require implementation of a strong, sector-led approach to skills development. In this regard, technical cooperation and assistance is a high priority for developing countries which can draw on the experience of other countries and the expertise of institutions, such as the ILO. Means to support implementation include a variety of arrangements and institutions to involve social partners in designing, using and improving training strategies.
- 17.** The Forum called upon labour and employment ministries at the forthcoming G20 Ministerial Meeting to advocate for sectoral approaches in training strategies with education ministries and, among others, those responsible for finance, investment, trade, health, transport and rural development. Training should be on top of the G20 agenda. Training initiatives need to be mainstreamed in broader development programmes and strategies, but it is equally important to take a “bottom-up” approach by considering the needs of local and regional labour markets.